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HOURS WITH THE BIBLE

OR

THE SCRIPTURES IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN DISCOVERY
AND KNOWLEDGE

BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND WORDS OF CHRIST"

VOL. III.

FROM SAMSON TO SOLOMON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK

JAMES POTT & CO., PUBLISHERS

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TO THE
CHURCHWARDENS' AND CONGREGATION

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THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE

UNIVERSAL KINDNESS AND HEARTY FRIENDSHIP

SHOWN ME CONSTANTLY BY ALL,

YOUNG AND OLD, RICH AND POOR, IN THE WHOLE DISTRICT,

THROUGHOUT THE TWO YEARS IN WHICH

I TRIED TO DO MY DUTY AMONG THEM.

Neuilly, Sept., 1881.

• WALTER PRIESTLEY, ESQUIRE

• C. E. TOLHUEST, ESQUIRE

Methodist Historical Society
11-18-57



PREFACE.

SINCE the publication of the second volume of these Hours with the Bible, the Church universal has suffered a heavy loss in the death of the gentle, brilliant, accomplished, and catholic-spirited Dean of Westminster. Indebted as I have been to his writings, his sudden removal has seemed like that of an intimate friend, for his books have for years been always at my side and very often in my hands. One can hardly realize that so much varied knowledge, such a faculty of picturesque description, so copious and many-sided an experience have passed away !

But if admirable as a writer, Arthur Stanley was still more so as a man. I had the pleasure of spending some time with him in his library only a few days before his fatal illness, and was struck more perhaps than I had ever been with his gentle amiability and goodness. We talked of my church at Neuilly, of the "charities" nominally connected with it, which he appraised at their true worth, for he knew their real character ; of books and of indifferent things, and I left him, little thinking that he was so near the pale kingdoms. Can a heart so true and

tender, so wide in its sympathies, so brave and noble, be now only a little dust? Can an intellect so acute, a mind so well stored have exhaled like a vapour that has faded away? Never! "The doctrine of the materialists," says Sir Humphry Davy, "was always, even in my youth, a cold, heavy, dull and insupportable doctrine to me, and necessarily tending to atheism. When I had heard with disgust, in the dissecting rooms, the plan of the physiologist, of the gradual accretion of matter and its becoming endowed with irritability, ripening into sensibility, and acquiring such organs as were necessary, by its own inherent forces, and at last rising into intellectual existence, a walk into the green fields or woods, by the banks of rivers, brought back my feelings from nature to God."¹ But such a man as Dean Stanley is a far grander revelation of the spiritual and eternal, for who can believe that such a being can altogether die? For my part I prefer to repeat the verses of Henry Vaughan,—

"They are all gone into the world of light!

And I alone sit lingering here;

Their very memory is pure and bright,

And my sad thoughts doth cheer.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast,

Like stars upon some gloomy grove,

Or those faint beams in which this hill is dressed,

After the sun's remove.

I see them walking in an air of glory,

Whose light doth trample on my days:

My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,

Mere glimmering and decays.

Dear beauteous Death! the jewel of the just,

Shining nowhere but in the dark;

¹ *Consolations in Travel* (written in 1829), p. 206.

What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
Could man outlook that mark !

He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest, may know
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair dell or grove it sings in now,
That is to him unknown."

Farewell, sweet saint, farewell ! As the light reflected on the clouds of evening tells us that the lands beyond our horizon lie in full sunshine, though we know nothing of their scenery or charms, so, the fair sunset of a godly life speaks of the splendours of eternity, of which, after all, we can realize so little.

"Sure the last end
Of the good man is peace ! How calm his exit !
Nightdews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary worn-out winds expire so soft,
Behold him in the ev'ning tide of life,
A life well spent, whose early care it was
His riper years should not upbraid his green :
By unperceived degrees he wears away ;
Yet, like the sun, seems larger at his setting."

Let us add, with Blair, in such a vision of euthanasia—

"All thanks to Him
Who scourged the venom out."

Or, better still, with St. Paul—

"O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?
The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I have been greatly indebted to the courtesy of the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund for permission to use a number of the illustrations in this volume, and would tender them my best thanks. Let me, while doing so, add how much I have been indebted to

their admirable Reports, in writing both these "Hours with the Bible," and my "Life and Words of Christ." The services the Fund have rendered to Bible Study are of priceless value. Sites have been identified; localities hitherto unknown described minutely; the peculiarities of the climate noted; customs vividly illustrative of many passages of Scripture brought to light; the topography of ancient Jerusalem and of the Temple explored; the physical structure and natural history of the country accurately and exhaustively recorded. In the Great Map published by the Fund, we have for the first time an exact mirror of the Holy Land, its hills and valleys; its streams and fountains; its towns and ruins; its wildernesses and its fruitful plains; its unique and lonely river; the Sea of Galilee, on whose shores Christ made His home, and that mysterious lake into which the Jordan descends.

The work hitherto done, however, embraces only the western half of Palestine; the Jordan and the Dead Sea forming its boundary. East of this all Bashan, including the old province of Iturea, of which Philip was tetrarch in the days of Christ; Gaulanitis, with a hundred and twenty ruined towns in it, some famous in Scripture history, others in that of the Church, or of the nations intimately connected with ancient Israel; Auranitis, or the Hauran, with the ruins of one hundred and fifty towns, some of them still in good preservation, with roofs, doors and window shutters of stone yet in their places; Argob, with the remains of more than sixty cities, carrying us back to the days when it was part of the kingdom of Og and made so fierce a resistance to the Hebrews before they crossed the Jordan; and "The hill of Bashan," with its district, formerly known as Batanea, which completes the territory of which Bashan is the general name,

beckon on explorers with all the mysterious attractions of an unknown land.

But even this wide region, embracing ancient kingdoms and provinces, is only part of the tract still unsurveyed. South of it lies the delightful heritage of Reuben, Gad and part of Manasseh, known as Gilead: a land of mountain and flood, of forest and corn-field, of pastures and meadows; almost every landscape rich with memorials of the distant past.

Still farther south stretch out the rich upland pastures of Moab, ploughed and seamed by stupendous ravines; dotted with ruins of cities often named in Bible story, and hiding, it may be, in their wreck, many invaluable records of Hebrew times, like the famous Moabite Stone found at Dibon.

Of all this wide region it is intended to make an accurate map on the scale of an inch to the mile; thus showing every feature of the landscape with minute distinctness. Plans of important localities and of ruined cities will be drawn; of Kir, it may be, on the walls of which king Mesa offered up his eldest son; of Rabbah, which Joab and David took so long to capture; or of the scene of Balaam and Balak's strangely exciting story. The very names of the incidents in Old Testament history whose scene lay in these territories rouse the intensest interest to know all we can respecting such localities. The destruction of the Cities of the Plain; the vision of Jacob at Mahanaim; his mysterious wrestling at Peniel; the wars of Moses and Joshua; the great defeat of the Arab tribes by Gideon; the victories of Jephthah; the campaigns of David against Ammon; the revolt and defeat of Absalom; the birth of Elijah; the scene of the death of Ahab and the wounding of Joram; and the track of Assyrian invasion, are only some of the details on which

Bashan, Gilead and Moab can tell us we know not how much. Heshbon, with its waters; Gadara, the scene of one of our Lord's miracles; Bethsaida Julias that of another; Cæsarea Philippi, the northernmost point of His wanderings; the locality of His Transfiguration, in its neighbourhood; Damascus, with its countless memories from Scripture times; the black fortress of Machærus, where John the Baptist was beheaded; Callirrhoe, where Herod was almost stifled in the warm bath, shortly before his death, are all, with many other sites no less interesting, east of the Jordan. Nor should we forget that the region now to be surveyed was the safe retreat to which the infant Church fled during the troubled times of the great struggle of the Jews against Rome, under Titus.

Eastern Palestine, from its remoteness, promises a richer harvest than the survey of the western half has yielded. Separated by the chasm of the Jordan, it has escaped to a great degree the ravages of war to which the latter has been exposed. Its ruins are hence far more perfect, and far more abundant, and the probability of finding memorials of Bible times is very much greater. It is by no means unlikely that inscriptions will be discovered dating as far back as the famous record of Mesa of Moab, the contemporary of Omri and Ahab. Antiquities of many kinds may be found, where things have been undisturbed for so many centuries. The number of Arab camps east of the Jordan, and their isolation from the comparatively civilized life of western Palestine, assures us of a rich field for the observation of manners and customs, unchanged since the earliest ages. If the survey of the West was popular, that of the East may well be more so. A dash of mystery and adventure heighten its interest. A veil hangs over these lands which one craves to lift!

I write thus fully, to interest my readers in the undertaking and induce them to support it. Money could hardly be better spent by those to whom the Bible is dear.¹

I am thankful to find that the two volumes of "Hours with the Bible" already published have met with so favourable a reception. No labour will be spared to make the others as reliable and thorough as possible. Life is so short and its responsibilities so great, that honest diligence is alike a necessity and a duty. That, at least, I shall try to show, and may the inspiration of the Almighty, which alone gives understanding, help me in my great task.

Since my last volume was published, I have felt constrained to resign my living at Neuilly, and fall back on my pen entirely. The dedication before this preface shows the relations on which my parish and I stood to each other. I bid them farewell with a full heart, for how else can I feel to a people who have been pleased to think that I was "a pattern of a true and faithful Christian pastor" in the two years I spent among them. That I did not remain with them permanently is neither their fault nor mine.

¹ The Office of the Palestine Fund is 1, Adam Street, Adelphi, Strand, London. The Secretary is Walter Besant, Esq., M.A., the well known author.



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HOURS WITH THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

SAMSON AND ELI.

TOWARDS the close of the wild and stormy period of the Judges, the Philistines were the most active and aggressive nation of Palestine. Strong in their military organization; fierce in their warlike spirit, and rich by their position and commercial instincts, they even threatened the ancient supremacy of the Phenicians of the north. Their cities were the restless centres of every form of activity. Ashdod and Gaza, as the keys of Egypt, commanded the carrying trade to and from the Nile, and formed the great depots for its imports and exports.¹ All the cities, moreover, traded in slaves with Edom and Southern Arabia,² and their commerce in other directions flourished so greatly as to gain for the people at large the name of Canaanite—which was synonymous with merchant.³ Their skill as smiths and armourers⁴

¹ Plut., *Alex.*, cap. 25. Mövers, *Die Phönizier*, vol. ii. pt. 1. pp. 315-317.

² Joel iii. 3-5. Amos i. 6.

³ Zeph. ii. 5. This name, however, was first given, in this sense, to the Phenicians. The word "Palestine" is derived from "Philistine."

⁴ 1 Sam. xiii. 20; xvii. 5,

was noted ; the strength of their cities attests their success as builders ; and their idols, and golden mice and emerods, show them to have been proficient in the gentle arts of peace.

But they were pre-eminently devoted to war, alike by sea and land. Egypt had been recently invaded by their fleet, and, soon after, apparently while Jephthah was struggling with Ammon on the uplands of Gilead, their ships, sweeping from the harbours of Gaza and Askelon, had attacked Sidon—the great Phenician city in the north—defeated its fleet, and taken the town, which henceforth sank into insignificance. Its aristocracy, indeed, had to flee to Tyre, and even that city was ere long extended to an island close at hand, to be more secure from these terrible sea kings.¹ Sidon, henceforth, lost its rank of capital, and disappeared from notice for several centuries ; its fall doubtless causing unspeakable joy in northern Israel, which could breathe freely when its great oppressor was thus humbled.

As far back as the time of Shamgar—a hundred and fifty years before—Dan and Judah had suffered from the raids of Philistine bands, who climbed to their mountain valleys, to spoil them ; and indeed the forced emigration of so many of the former may have been caused by these.² But a regular conquest of the whole country was not attempted till the days of Samson,³ about three hundred and fifty years after the death of Joshua.⁴

On the edge of the hill country, about twenty miles almost straight behind Ashdod, on a slope overhanging the green Wady Surar—the ancient Sorek—the village of Zorah nestled among its vines and fig-trees. The

¹ *Justin*, I. xviii. 2.

² *Munk*, p. 200.

³ Shamgar, B.C. 1295. Samson, B.C. 1131. *Conder*, p. 19.

⁴ *Conder*, p. 19.

district lies 2,000 feet above the sea, and is known as the "Arkub" or ridge—a long spur from the mountains, with numerous smaller ridges branching from it; the two valleys of Sorek and Elah lying in their northern and southern folds.¹ The former, half a mile broad, is filled in summer with luxuriant corn, through which winds a pebbly torrent bed in the centre; low white hills bounding both sides. The ruins of Beth-shemesh—"the House of the Sun"—lie on a knoll surrounded by olive groves, where Sorek and Elah join; on the south of Sorek is Timnah; and Zorah and Eshtaol, now small mud villages, dot its north face. Sweeping down the slopes of the Shephelah, towards the Philistine plain, the broad corn valley is fair to see, whether from the high-perched home of Samson, or from the lowlands; opening as it does, in the one case, on the rich land of the plain, and in the other, closing with a background of high and rugged hills.

Here, at Zorah, lived one of the few households still faithful to Jehovah amidst the ever-growing apostasy of the times, and in it was born a son, destined from his infancy to arrest the thoughts of those around, and lead them to contrast the present and the past. Before his birth his mother had not been allowed to taste wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean,² and the same prohibition was imposed from the first on the child, with the addition, that his hair should at no time be touched by scissors or razor.³ Nor was he allowed even to eat the grape, or any of its productions, or to approach a dead body, though that of his nearest relation. He was, in fact, a Nazarite—"one consecrated" to God; in this case, for his whole life.

¹ Conder's *Tent Work*, pp. 141-144.

² Jud. xiii. 14.

³ Jud. xiv. 17.

Such a vow of separation had been provided for in the Mosaic laws;¹ but no earlier instance is recorded of its being carried out. The distinction of clean and unclean acts had also been made for centuries, but the whole Levitical system must have fallen into abeyance during the isolation, disturbance, anarchy, and idolatry, that had reigned more or less since Joshua's death. Wherever the child appeared he would, thus, be a living reproof to the people; reminding them at once of their duties and their neglect. As he grew up, moreover, it was found that this dedication to Jehovah brought with it endowments which secured what Israel, for centuries, had sighed to gain—such a resistless force and vigour as was, in itself, a pledge of national independence if, by a similar course, it was obtained by numbers. “The Spirit of Jehovah,” which had clothed Jephthah with courage and resolution, showed itself in young Samson, by giving him prodigious strength and a fearlessness that never quailed. What if Israel, by returning to the worship of God, gained, as a people, the possession of gifts so invaluable in their present state? The religious revival under Samuel, himself a Nazarite from his birth,² may well have had its first impulse from the stories of the hero of Dan; so mighty because dedicated to Jehovah, and still alive within a few years of the great prophet's birth. His influence, indeed, can only be realized aright by remembering the condition to which the Hebrews were reduced in his day. The Philistines had brought even the great tribe of Judah to such abject submission, that instead of aiding the hero who was daring all for national independence, it meanly betrayed him.³ No such enemies had endangered Israel since the oppres-

¹ Num. vi. 1-21.

² 1 Sam. i. 11, yet no mention is made of abstinence from wine.

³ Jud. xv. 11.

sion in Egypt. Aided by the remains of the aboriginal races living in their cities, they climbed the passes at their will, and harried the valleys, carrying off not only the harvest when ripe, but even men, women, and children, to slavery.¹ To secure the permanence of their conquest, they had, moreover, so completely disarmed the Hebrews, as to force them to descend to a Philistine city for even the slightest repairs of their agricultural implements; no worker in iron being allowed among them;² a policy so effective that the country was kept by it in virtual slavery for over a hundred years. It was due to Samson that resistance was kept up at all, under such circumstances. His example rekindled the national spirit and bravery so that, in after years, however oppressed, they constantly made new attempts to shake off the yoke of the hated uncircumcised alien. The unequal combat was kept up with a grand tenacity, through successive generations, amidst frequent defeats, from the days of Eli to those of David, "the breaker of the Philistine's horn."³ During that long interval, even when the Hebrews were at their lowest, and forced to hide in caves and clefts of the rocks, or to flee beyond Jordan,⁴ single heroes, like Saul and Jonathan, fired by the stories of the past, rose amidst their unarmed brethren, sword in hand, to strike once more for freedom. The long domination of the Philistines was, indeed, thanks to Samson, in a special degree the heroic age of Israel. Men would not despair, but trusted more and more that, in the end, Jehovah would aid them. It was the time when independence and the free enjoyment of their institutions was won by God's help, through the brave struggles of the people and of single patriots.

¹ Joel iii. 6. Amos i. 6.² 1 Sam. xiii. 19-21.³ Son of Sirach xlvii. 7.⁴ 1 Sam. xiii. 6.

Later ages looked back with pride on the days when their valiant ancestors went out against the giant Avites who scorned Israel—against Goliath, and Ishbi-benob, with his terrible spear, and against Saph with his twenty-four fingers and toes.¹ Stirring tales of the deeds of these heroes doubtless roused the souls of each new generation, and were recorded by chroniclers proud to tell such stories of patriotic glory. Unfortunately, however, they are all long ago lost, and we have only short notices, evidently quoted from fuller writings.

In this roll-call of noble spirits, but surpassing them all in his splendid deeds, Samson assuredly stood first. Endowed with superhuman power, he undertook, alone, to resist the oppressor, when Israel had submitted to the yoke. At no time had he any aid beyond such a band as he could gather from his own neighbourhood. Indifference, or want of spirit, or fear, left him unsupported by even a single tribe. His very name marks his work, and the terror and pride he raised in foe and friend, for it means “The Destroyer”—not, as has been fancied by some, “The Sunny,” or the “The Sun-hero.”² His various deeds are too well known to need detailed enumeration. One thought animates him in all alike—undying hatred to the enemy of Jehovah and His people. In this aspect he is truly a heroic servant of God. The tasks such a title implies are very different at different times, and in the days of Samson lay supremely in re-

¹ 2 Sam. xxi. xxiii.

² Volck and Mühlau, and Dean Stanley understand it as “the Sun-hero” and “the Sunny,” but I cannot avoid thinking that Bertheau and Schenkel are more correct in translating it “The Destroyer.” See *Ges. Lex.*, 8th ed., *Schimson*. *Jewish Church*, vol. i, p. 364. Art. *Simson*, in *Bib. Lex.*; and Bertheau, *Richter*, p. 169.

sisting the "uncircumcised." It is in this sense only, indeed, that we are to think of the Divine Spirit and power urging him on, irresistibly, to his mighty acts, "springing on him," or "driving" him, as if with a push which he could not withstand.¹

The incidents recorded of this Jewish Hercules are in keeping with his surpassing physical vigour. Unconscious of fear, he moves in radiant cheerfulness in the midst of dangers which would appal ordinary men. He delights in the play of humour, often simple as that of a child; sometimes terribly grim.² He must have his riddles like others, at his wearisome seven days' marriage feast. His revenge for the loss of his wife by setting the jackals, with burning fire-brands behind them, into the standing corn, is a boisterous practical joke; and his irrepressible lightheartedness beams out in schemes to snare his enemies by repeatedly submitting to bonds of ropes or withes, which he knew he could snap in a moment, when they had lured his foes within reach. Even in his death he is still the same. Called out from his prison, in his blindness, to play the clown before the great folk of the Philistines, he sings, dances, and acts the buffoon amidst roars of laughter,³ and when he has laid their suspicions asleep, prays that Jehovah may strengthen him only this once that he may by one blow avenge himself for his two eyes.⁴

The allusions in the whole story vividly illustrate the exact correspondence of the Scripture narrative, even in details, to local truth. The presence of lions in Palestine in ancient times, especially in the south part of it,⁵ where

¹ So, literally. ² This is freely brought out by Dean Stanley.

³ This is implied in the word used. Jud. vi. 25.

⁴ Jud. xvi. 28. *Sept.*

⁵ Josh. xv. 32. See Wilton's *Negeb*, pp. 42-47. De Sauley

a village in Judah bore the name of "Lebaoth"—the lionesses—is undoubted. There are no fewer than four names for the lion in Hebrew; and it not only supplied the imagery of Psalmists and Prophets, but lingered on till the time of the Crusades, and is mentioned by historians of the twelfth century,¹ as found near Samaria. That a swarm of bees should have hived in the dead carcass of the one slain by Samson would be natural in Palestine, however strange to our notions. The dry hot climate, anticipating putrefaction, would in a few hours evaporate all the moisture of the body, and turn it into a mummy; while the ants would presently eat away all the flesh, leaving only the skeleton and the skin, and thus hollow out the creature to a shell, admirably fitted for a hive. That bees should have swarmed in such a home is, in fact, no more strange than that wrens or sparrows should build, as they have been known to do, in the dried body of a crow or hawk, in England.² That Samson should be able to catch three hundred jackals, as the word really means, is, moreover, not at all surprising, for these animals hunt in large packs, and are still very numerous in southern Palestine.³ To tear up the gates of a town may seem an incredible feat, but Samson's

came on similar traces near Masada, on the Dead Sea. The lion is said still to be found in the Sinai Peninsula. Wilson's *Lands of the Bible*, vol. ii. p. 739. But see, on this subject, vol. ii. p. 334 and note. The Rabbis find seven words for the lion in Scripture.

¹ Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 116.

² *Ibid.*, p. 324. *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Bee*.

³ See vol. ii. p. 334. 1 Sam. xiii. 17. Ovid states that foxes were let loose in the Roman games, with fire-brands burning at their tails. He adds, "Wherever they flee they set on fire the fields clothed with the harvests; the wind giving the destroying flame strength." *Fasti*, v. 707.

achievement at Gaza required only his lifting them off the pin on which they turned; for hinges are made in the East in two separate pieces—a pin and a socket. As to his pulling down the house in which the Philistine lords were gathered, we have only to think of it as resembling in structure not a few Eastern dwellings, to understand how this could be effected. “I have often,” says Mr. Shaw, “seen numbers of people on the roof of the Dey’s palace at Algiers, diverting themselves with performances carried on in the open court-yard below. The roof, like many others, had an advanced cloister over against the gate of the palace, like a large pent-house, supported by one or two contiguous pillars in the front, or in the centre. Here, likewise, they have their public entertainments, as the lords and others of the Philistines had in the house of Dagon, and hence, if that structure were like this, the pulling down the front or centre pillars which supported it, would at once be attended with the like catastrophe that happened to the Philistines.”¹

The moral decay of Israel in these times is darkly intimated by an incident recorded of the second generation

¹ Shaw’s *Barbary*, vol. i. pp. 391–2. Samson, the fool of women all his life, set, in his blindness, to do a woman slave’s work in turning the hand-mill as he sat on the floor, was the very superlative of humiliation.

A mistranslation in Judges xv. 19 has led to the idea that Samson was miraculously supplied with water from the jaw-bone with which he had slain his enemies. But the word used—Lehi = a jawbone—refers to the hill where the battle took place, which rose in shape like a jaw, or was named thus as the spot where the jawbone was cast away. The verse should read—“God clave the hollow place that is in Lehi, and there came water thereout . . . wherefore the name thereof was called En-hakkore—the Caller’s Fountain, which is in Lehi to this day.”

after Moses.¹ During the long period of external quiet that followed the defeat of Chushan Rishathaim, "the Talar," or "circular sword" "bearer,"² the men of Gibeah, of the tribe of Benjamin, a town on an isolated hill about a mile north of the present Jerusalem,³ had committed an outrage, recalling the worst guilt of Sodom, on the concubine of a Levite who chanced to be lodging in the place for a night. It was a violation of the sacred rights of hospitality, as well as an act of unequalled grossness, but it was bitterly revenged. In his wild indignation, the husband forthwith cut the body of his murdered wife into twelve pieces, and sent the bleeding witnesses of his wrong through the whole land. A storm of indignation followed, culminating in a great assembly of the tribes at Mizpeh, "the watch tower;" close to the scene of the crime. A summons was presently sent to Benjamin, to deliver up the offenders, that they might be put to death, and evil thus "put away from Israel," but it was treated with contempt. Furious at the rejection of their demand, indignant also at the crime, and, moreover, alarmed lest, if it were not punished, Divine vengeance might strike the whole race, war was now resolved on. But the bravery of the Benjamites and their skill in fighting⁴ gave them at first an advantage even against the overwhelming odds of the eleven tribes, who were "knit together as one man" against them. There is a strange mixture of fierceness and religious feeling in the narrative. Counsel is sought from God, through the stern Phinehas,⁵ then high priest, and three times Israel

¹ Jud. xx. 28.

² *Hitzig*.

³ *Mühlau und Volck*, p. 145.

⁴ Jud. xx. 16.

⁵ The Ark is said to have been at the house of God, Bethel, at the time. Jud. ix. 20, 26, 31. Yet xxi. 12, the camp is said to be at Shiloh.

is launched against the petty tribe, strong in their hearts, and in the defences of their hills. The host weeps, prays, fasts, and offers burnt offerings and peace offerings after two successive defeats, and then turns once more, with greater skill, to the relentless attack. Stratagem at last succeeds where direct force had hitherto failed. Benjamin, allured from the hill top by a pretended flight, finds, ere long, the town behind it, in flames, and sees itself hemmed in on every side by multitudes. In the terrible struggle that followed the tribe was almost exterminated: only 600 men surviving out of nearly 27,000.¹ These saved themselves by flight to the crag of Rimmon, "the pomegranate," the present village of Rammon, east of Bethel,² where they maintained themselves for four months, dreading to descend from their height of vantage.

Remorse at such terrible vengeance, now, however, seized the eleven tribes. Their national feeling was wounded at the thought that they had well nigh blotted out one of the divisions of the people, and their only care was to undo the evil as far as possible. The whole of the women and maidens of Benjamin had been ruthlessly killed: the towns and hamlets burnt, and the very cattle and flocks slaughtered, as devoted by a curse to destruction. No wives remained for the remnant of the men. Still worse, all Israel had bound themselves, under a curse, not to give one of their daughters in marriage to them. Gathering again, therefore, at Shiloh, the people abode before "the house of God till even, and lifted up their voices and wept sore" at the thought that henceforth one of the tribes would be blotted out. But the very sternness of their former mood at last brought a remedy.

¹ Jud. xx. 15, 47.

² Conder's *Handbook*, p. 423.

A "great oath" had been made by the former assembly, devoting to death any who failed to come up to the common help, to Mizpeh, and it was now found that the men of Jabesh Gilead, a town east of the Jordan, six miles south of the future Pella, on the top of one of the green hills of Gilead, overlooking the rich Wady Jabis, had failed to attend the rendezvous. An expedition was therefore launched against them, and the whole population put to the sword, or, as the Hebrew expresses it, "devoted," as having forfeited their lives to God; only 400 maidens being spared. These were now brought to Shiloh, and presently sent to the crag Rimmon, to "proclaim peace" to the fugitive Benjamites, who were only too glad to take the olive branch thus tardily offered. The captive girls were then given to them as wives. But 200 men still remained unsupplied. A pious fraud, however, secured them partners also. No father in Israel could give his daughter to them, but they were to hide in the vineyards at Shiloh at the yearly feast, when the maidens were dancing in the open, and each catch one for himself for a wife: the fathers soothing their consciences from a charge of having broken their oaths, by the specious defence that they had not given their daughters to Benjamites; the eager bridegrooms having taken them by force.

From such a small beginning had the tribe to found a new history for itself in Israel.

Samson appears to have lived about a hundred years before David,¹ when things were almost at their lowest in Israel. The lawlessness, disunion, and demoralization of the country are reflected in the notices preserved to us of his life; but, even amidst its roughest passages, there is evidence of an undercurrent of still life which

¹ About B.C. 1131. David took Jerusalem B.C. 1044. *Conder.*

held its own amidst the troubles of the age. The vintage ripens peacefully in the sun, and the marriage feast runs through seven days, with its jests and riddles. Another glimpse of this calmer side of things is revealed in the Book of Ruth, which apparently refers to the same period, and brings before us the mountain village of Bethlehem and the sunny valley underneath, as they were 3,000 years ago, with their humble life, in its lights and shadows; the waving harvest falling before rows of brown reapers, and the maidens binding the sheaves behind them.

This gentle pastoral is introduced into the canon from its connection with the history of David, the hero-king of Israel, and, through him, with our Lord. The spoilers have wasted the district round Bethlehem-Judah, or perhaps the rains have failed, and men have to wander where they can for bread. Among others, Elimelech, "My God is King," with his wife Naomi, "the Loveable," and their two sons, Mahlon, "the Sickly," and Chilion, "the Pining One," make their way to the richly-watered uplands of Moab, where the language is the same, though the faith be different. Yet the trouble which they sought to flee follows them in a worse shape, for Naomi is presently a widow. Her two sons marry women of Moab, but the bridal chamber is soon hung with mourning, for the two wives are ere long without husbands. Only the three widows remain.

Naomi now hears that Jehovah has "visited His people in giving them bread," and sighs in a strange land, for the familiar scenes and faces of her old happy life. She will go back to Bethlehem, but begs her two daughters-in-law to remain in their own country, thanking them tenderly for the kindness they had shown the dead. Orpah, "the Fawn," kisses her and stays, but Ruth, the

true "Friend," will not leave her, and goes on with her to her old home. The rest of the book is simply the story of Naomi's gratitude, shown in true womanly fashion, by her schemes to get Ruth a home. The old Jewish marriage customs required the nearest relation



A BEDOUIN WOMAN. *Lieut. Conder, R.E.*

of a dead husband to become his goël or redeemer, buying back his inheritance, if estranged, and marrying his widow, if childless; to raise up a son to him, that "his name should not cease in Israel." Naomi bethinks herself that Boaz, "the Active," one of the rich men of the village, is a goël of Ruth's dead husband, and lays her kindly plans accordingly. Ruth must go to his fields and glean, for harvest has begun, and the barley is being cut. He will see her there and perhaps she may find favour in his eyes. Nor is she wrong, for Boaz presently notices her,

and falls in love with her at first sight. Then the relationship is disclosed, with its claim on him to marry her, which he will be only too happy to honour, if he can do so legally. But there is another goël nearer than he, who must first be asked. Should that kinsman decline,

he himself will be a husband to Ruth, and Naomi shall have back her inheritance. The end, as might have been expected, is that Boaz and Ruth become man and wife, and her first son is Obed, the grandfather of David.

The glimpses of ancient life in the future town of David and of Christ are full of interest. Then, as now, its single street ran along the double crest of the white chalk ridge, 2,500 feet above the sea; its slopes terraced into hanging gardens, with rows of olives and vines; a pleasant valley lying underneath on three sides, musical with the sound of brooks, though its eastern end is almost touched by the terrible wilderness of Judah. This sunny breadth, when Ruth's story opens, is yellow with ripe barley, and rich with tall green wheat that will be golden ere long. The harvest is reaped by men, but the sheaves are bound by maidens. Life is still simple, and the well-to-do Boaz courteously greets his work-people, as he comes to them, and is as politely greeted in return. Their meals, while at work, are as simple as all else—only ears of the barley they are cutting, roasted and shelled by hand, the customary food of Arab reapers even now,¹—and thin cakes of bread, dipped in sour wine as a relish, with clear water, drawn by the young men, for drink. Nor is Boaz himself too grand to eat with the rest, or to join in their work. If he does not reap, he winnows the grain, after younger arms have threshed it out on the floor in the open field, and, like his successors in the same parts in our own day,² he lies down to sleep by his heap at night, that he may watch it. Gleaning is allowed by the old law of Moses,³ but the kindness of the statute book is too often forgotten in practice; for Ruth owes it rather to her gentleness and her good looks,

¹ Robinson's *Palestine*, vol. ii. p. 660. ² *Ibid.*, p. 720.

³ Lev. xix. 9; xxiii. 22 to xxiv. 19.

than to Moses, that the young men do not reproach her, or order her away. But roasted corn and water are not the only food; for when the day's work has ended, Boaz eats and drinks better fare, till his heart is merry. The elders of Bethlehem are its local council, and they and all the men of the village, with the eager curiosity and utter indifference to the loss of time characteristic of the East, gather round Boaz and the other goël, as they make the final business arrangements, by which the former buys back her field for Naomi, and gains Ruth for himself, taking off his sandal and giving it to the vendor as evidence, according to an old Jewish custom, of the sale having been perfected by a second goël, the first having refused to do his duty.¹ Nor are the women less completely our sisters. What modern matchmaker could be more skilful than Naomi! what maiden more modestly careful to do her best to attract than Ruth, as she "washes and anoints herself, and puts on her best clothes" when she hopes to see Boaz?² Even the gathering of the women on the birth of the infant Obed, and their congratulations, are true to human nature in every age.

One feature of this charming idyll, however, gives it a specially distinctive colour—its intense religiousness. Despite centuries of oppression, division, and religious decay, it breathes a lofty spirit of loyalty to Jehovah, which appears at every turn. It is He who has given His people bread; He who deals kindly with the widow;

¹ See Deut. xxv. 7-10. The text implies that this custom had fallen into disuse when the Book of Ruth was written.

² Boaz gives Ruth six measures or seahs = 2 ephahs = according to Josephus to over 17 gallons of barley; according to the Rabbis, to 9 gallons. "He laid it on her," that is, doubtless, on her head, after he had measured it into her cloak.

He who grants her that she may rest in the house of a husband. But it is He also who tries the children of men, and from whose hand afflictions go out against them. Indeed, He at times deals "very bitterly," even with those who love Him, but He is still their God, under whose wings they trust, and who recompenses man's work and gives him a full reward. He is no mere name to which to turn in formal rites, but a Father,—the Friend and Protector, yet, also, the sovereign Judge and Lord,—demanding obedience and heavily punishing sin. That such conceptions still found a home in Israel, after more than four hundred years of moral and political degradation, and still filled the life of some at least, with the thought of God, and of their race being His chosen people, was the guarantee of future national regeneration. It was certain that, ever and again, such truths would assert themselves in the hearts of the nation, and bring with them political as well as moral renewal; the one, indeed, as the result of the other.

But this peaceful glimpse of everyday life in the quiet of Bethlehem is only a moment of sunshine through thick clouds. That so much private worth and religious earnestness should still remain in the hidden nooks of the land was indeed the best pledge of its rise hereafter from the disasters of the present; but the recovery was to be delayed for a long time yet. The want of a central government still left Israel weak and helpless; for though Judges might rise in any tribe, and for a time beat off the swarming enemies round, their sphere was at best only local, and their power ended with victory. Without any lasting or general combination, the different parts of the country could be attacked in detail, and harried or enslaved. Nor was the picture shown in the story of Ruth that of the country at large. Constant intermarriages

with the heathen still continued, and had introduced a low morality that sapped the character of the nation, even in its priesthood. In this gloomy time the name of Eli emerges as both the High Priest at Shiloh and the Judge of Israel, but he comes before us in his feeble old age, with a soft and yielding goodness ill suited for the times. Only gentle words come from his lips, and he is unable even to rebuke his unworthy sons with the sternness their offences demanded. But such a spirit must, in those rough times, have had its special worth, in the influence of a blameless life, and in commending widely the religion it exemplified. Hence we may justly regard him as no unworthy agent in the religious revival which culminated under Samuel, and raised Israel from its political degradation. Despairing hearts from Ephraim or Dan, or from beyond the Jordan, must have constantly sought the high priest at Shiloh; nor can it be doubted that they would be pointed by him to Jehovah, the God of their fathers, as the true help of the nation in its troubles, and made to feel that their having forsaken Him had brought them all their sorrow.





CHAPTER II.

ELI.

ELI marks a transition period, when things were tending more and more to the establishment of centralized power; for hitherto, so far as we know, no high priest had been also judge. But his pontificate may itself mark the darkness of the times, for he was of the race of Ithamar,¹ not of Phinehas, the successor of Aaron in the elder branch. Had some temple revolution put him in power? Or was the heir of Phinehas too young at his predecessor's death to wear the ephod? Eli's elevation as judge may perhaps have been due to some warlike deed in his earlier life; for the Philistines seem to have been driven back, when his name first occurs, from the position they held in Samson's day.² Or it may be that he received the name of judge simply from his giving counsel to the warlike bands which came to Shiloh to consult the Urim and Thummim respecting their proposed enterprises; for the high priests of Israel were not wont to go out to battle.³

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. i. 3. 1 Sam. vi. 4, 15; xiv. 3; xxii. 20, 24. 1 Chron. xxv. 3. The Rabbis say that the line of Phinehas was displaced because that high priest had been compromised in the matter of Jephthah's daughter.

² Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 577.

³ Graetz, vol. i. p. 142.

Quiet, sympathetic, and humble before God, as we find him in his old age, Eli had yet been unable to do more than sow the seed of a future reformation in the community. The very priesthood around him, and even his two sons, were tainted with the prevailing licentiousness. In the words of Scripture, they were men of Belial, or "the pit"—that awful abyss, which, to the Hebrews, was the home of evil spirits. As priests, they should have set an example of godliness; but, instead of that, they looked on their office simply as a means of gratifying their self-indulgence and sensual passions. The Mosaic rites were still observed at Shiloh, and these required that *burnt-offerings* should be wholly consumed by fire on the altar. *Sin-offerings*, on the other hand, were eaten by the priests. In the case of *peace-offerings*, however, the fat of the inside alone was burned on the altar. The priest had then, for his share, the breast and the shoulder, after they had been waved before the Lord; the rest of the victim being returned to the offerer, to be eaten by himself and his family, with such friends as he invited. But this appointed arrangement did not satisfy Eli's sons. "They knew not or cared nothing for Jehovah, nor for the legal due of the priests from the people."¹ Their lawful portion not contenting them, they sent their servants to the place where the share belonging to the offerer was being boiled, and these thrust "a flesh-hook of three teeth" into the pot, and claimed for their masters whatever it brought up. Nor was this all; they forthwith demanded, even before the fat had been offered on the altar, a share of the raw flesh, ostensibly to roast, but perhaps also to secure a larger booty. No greater outrage could have been committed than thus to desecrate the sacred offerings, nor was it a slight thing

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 13. Wellhausen. Thenius.

to take away the sacred food from those to whom it belonged. Amidst the prevailing lawlessness such an example set by the sons of the high priest soon showed its natural consequence, by men "holding in contempt" the whole service.¹

But this was not their whole, or even their worst offence. Women were employed outside the Tabernacle² to prepare the sacred bread; to attend to the holy garments, and to lead the sacred songs and dances, in which others of their sex, from all the tribes, joined at the great festivals. "The singers," says David,³ speaking of the Tabernacle, "go before, the players on instruments follow after, in the midst of damsels playing with timbrels." Indeed, the popular poetry and music were left mainly in the hands of the women till David's time,⁴ as we see in the cases of Miriam and of Deborah. The sex was not employed in cleaning the sacred Tent, because females were excluded from part of it; such work, moreover, is usually done by men in the East. These choristers, if we may call them so, the sons of Eli only too successfully corrupted; nor could the gentle high priest rouse himself to his duty further than to give godly counsels to the offenders, instead of inflicting on them stern punishment. "Why do ye such things?" said he; "for I hear of your evil dealings⁵ from all the people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I

¹ The offence taken at this lawless proceedings of Eli's sons, shows that the people, as a whole, held to the exact observance of the Mosaic worship, at least in Shiloh.

² Exod. xxxviii. 8. 1 Sam. ii. 22. In both cases the word "assembled," is lit. "did duty."

³ Ps. lxxviii. 26.

⁴ Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 502. *Alterthümer*, p. 379 See Exod. xv. 20. Jud. v. 12; xi. 34. 1 Sam. ii. 1-11; xviii. 6-9:

xxi. 12

⁵ Literally.

hear the Lord's people to be spreading.¹ If a man sin against another, one can pray for him to God; but if he sin against God, who shall intercede for him?"² Such weakness brought with it a heavy penalty. A prophet—the first mentioned since the days of Moses—came to Eli with the terrible message: "Thus saith Jehovah. Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father (Aaron) when they were in bondage to Pharaoh,³ and did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer on My altar, to burn incense, and wear an ephod before Me? And did I give to the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore will ye wickedly trample down⁴ My sacrifice and My offering, which I have commanded them; and honour your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel My people?" "For this," he went on to say, "The days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house. and will break their strength, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou, the enemy of My sanctuary, wilt look greedily on all the good that God does to Israel,⁵ and there shall not be an old man in thy house for ever. And yet I will not destroy every one belonging to thee from Mine altar, which thine eyes slight and thy soul despises;⁶ but all the increase of thy house shall die in the flower of their age."⁷ As a sign that this would certainly happen, he foretold, moreover, that Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, would die in one day: that the priesthood would be continued in the

¹ *Ewald.*

² *Thenius. Sept. 1 Sam. ii. 23-25.*

³ *Sept. 1 Sam. ii. 27-34.*

⁴ *Literally. Thenius.*

⁵ *Zunz.* Thenius translates it, "And thou shalt look eagerly or a rock of defence, and all the good," etc.

⁶ *Zunz.*

⁷ *Sept., "by the sword."*

elder line, not in his; and that his race would sink to obscurity and want. How fully this curse was fulfilled will be seen hereafter.

But this was not the only announcement of the doom of the worthy but weak old man's race. A family lived in Ramathaim Zophim—"the two heights of the Zuphites"—perhaps "the watchers" or "lookers out" or "prophets,"¹—apparently in the very south of the mountains of Ephraim, where they reach down towards Jerusalem. The name of the husband was Elkanah—"whom God created;" but there were two wives—Hannah, "Grace" or "Favour," and Peninnah, "Coral;" the second having likely been taken because the first had no children. But, as might have been expected, this double marriage—a thing even then uncommon—did not add to his happiness, for even among Orientals the misery of polygamy is proverbial. "*From what I know,*" says one, "it is easier to live with two tigresses than with two wives." And a Persian poet is of well nigh the same opinion:—

"Be that man's life immersed in gloom
Who needs more wives than one:
With one his cheeks retain their bloom,
His voice a cheerful tone:
These speak his honest heart at rest,
And he and she are always blest.
But when with two he seeks for joy,
Together they his soul annoy;
With two no sunbeam of delight
Can make his day of misery bright."²

¹ So the Targums. "Zuph" is among the ancestors of Samuel. 1 Sam. i. 1.

² *Manners and Customs of the Women in Persia.* Translated by J. Atkinson, Esq., for the Oriental Translation Fund. London, 1832.

An old Eastern drama is no less explicit:—

“Wretch! would'st thou have another wedded slave?
 Another! what, another! At thy peril
 Presume to try the experiment: would'st thou not
 For that unconscionable, foul desire,
 Be linked to misery? Sleepless nights, and days
 Of endless torment—still recurring sorrow
 Would be thy lot. Two wives! O never, never.
 Thou hast not power to please two rival queens;
 Their tempers would destroy thee; sear thy brain;
 Thou canst not, Sultan, manage more than one.
 Even one may be beyond thy government!”¹

Yet Elkanah was a worthy man, and even in these wild and evil times went up yearly, with his whole family, to Shiloh, at the Passover. But the household sacrifices there brought him trouble; for he had to give Peninnah and her sons and daughters each a share in the offerings, while the childless Hannah could have only a single portion,² though he loved her better than her rival.

The story of Hannah's betaking herself, after the family rejoicings, to the door of the Tabernacle, where Eli used to sit; her bitterness of soul at Peninnah's taunts; her weeping and silent prayer for a son³ are exquisitely told; as well as her vow that, if God granted her desire, she would consecrate the infant to Him as a Nazarite. In due time the birth of Samuel, “Heard of God,” answered the lowly cry. Grief had long saddened his

¹ *Atkinson.*

² 1 Sam. i. 5. *Sept.*

³ If a *daughter* be born the father often refuses to see or speak to the mother, and the friends and relatives, particularly the females, upbraid her, and condole with the husband as if he had been ill treated. It is often, moreover, made an excuse for sending away the wife. *Land and Book*, p. 124.

Vows in anticipation of the birth of a child are common in the East. Rosenmüller, *Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 73.

mother,¹ but she now rejoiced. Year after year, when her husband went up to Shiloh, to offer his sacrifice, and to pay his tithes,² she stayed at home with her son, till he should be old enough to take with her to the Tabernacle, and be left there as "a loan to Jehovah" for his whole life.

Entrusted, at last, to Eli, who lovingly accepted him, the child grew up in the sanctuary, and "ministered to the Lord" in a linen ephod, the special priestly vestment originally worn by the high priests only,³ though that of Samuel, who was a Levite by birth, but not a priest,⁴ was as yet of ordinary linen; not the finer material used for the higher office.⁵ It was his mother's delight to bring him his simple vestment, made by her own hands,⁶ year by year, when she came up to the feast.

Through Samuel, Eli heard, even more solemnly than from the lips of the prophet, the fate awaiting his house. The child, busied by day in little cares connected with the Tabernacle, slept at night in some part of it, as did also Eli. Near the entrance of the holy place, on the left, stood the seven-branched "candlestick," now mentioned for the last time, and superseded in the reign of Solomon by ten separate candlesticks, but revived after the

¹ 1 Sam. i. 15. *Sept.*

² 1 Sam. i. 21. *Sept.*

³ Exod. xxviii. 4. 1 Sam. ii. 28; xiv. 3; xxii. 18. Hos. iii. 4.

⁴ 1 Chron. vi. 27, 28.

⁵ The one was of *bad*; the other, of *shesh*. Samuel would probably at first be in charge of the women of the tabernacle. But as soon as his age permitted, simple offices were assigned him. The House of God was thus the only home he knew, and his earliest impressions were associated with it.

⁶ It is striking how generally ladies of all ranks made clothes for those they loved, in antiquity. The Emperor Augustus commonly wore clothes made for him by his wife, sister, or daughter. Sueton., *August.*, p. 73.

captivity in the copy of the original form still to be seen on the Arch of Titus.¹ It was the only light in the Tabernacle through the night, and after being trimmed each evening, all its lamps but one were extinguished just before morning, when the curtains of the outer entrance were once more drawn aside.² It was in the stillness of the early dawn, the time of "visions of the night," when heavy sleep is breaking with the approach of day, that the soft voice of a child was divinely chosen to announce

to Eli the doom of his line, because his sons had "reviled God,"³ and their father had not restrained them.

The first blow fell on the guilty priests, Hophni, "the Fighter;" and Phinehas, "the Brazen-mouthed."⁴ The relentless Philistines were again invading Israel, and



ARK OF AMMON.

had beaten and driven back its host at a spot between the western entrance of the pass of Bethhoron, and Bethshemesh "the House of the Sun," a village on the hills above the broad Maritime Plain, on a line between Ashdod and Jerusalem. The Philistines were in the habit of bringing the images of their gods into the battlefield, to

¹ Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. i. p. 377.

² 1 Sam. iii. 15. 1 Chron. ix. 27.

³ *Sept. Thenius.* 1 Sam. iii. 13.

⁴ Perhaps "the Oracle."

secure the victory;¹ could it be that the want of any similar heavenly guardianship on the side of Israel had caused its defeat? The chiefs of the host, as superstitious as their foe, concluded that it must be so. Had they had the Ark with them, it would have secured Jehovah's support, for did He not dwell between the cherubim that overarched it? Off therefore, across the hills, to Shiloh, marched a band, and brought back to the camp the awful symbol, attended by Hophni and Phinehas, as its priestly guardians. Now, at last, they must triumph, and the "earth rang again" with their shouts of joy in the anticipation. Spies soon told the Philistines what had happened, but the thought that they had to strive with the mighty God who had smitten Egypt only roused them to desperate courage. "Would they be slaves to the Hebrews, as the Hebrews had been to them? No; they would quit themselves like men."

That very day, or the next, there ran from the Israelitish army, up the steep pass, over and round the countless hills, nearly thirty miles as the crow flies, to Shiloh, a Benjamite; accomplishing the distance before night. News from the army was anxiously awaited throughout the villages of the tribes, but nowhere more eagerly than in the sanctuary-town, from which the Ark had been carried forth to the battlefield.² Among the rest, however, two especially longed to hear the result—Eli, now 98 years old, and blind; and the wife of Phinehas. Eli, in his anxiety, sat on his wonted seat by the gate of the Tabernacle, at the road side.³ Presently, as the even-

¹ 2 Sam. v. 21.

² This was, apparently, the first time it had been so (1 Sam. iv. 7). We afterwards find the Ark on the field with the army at the siege of Ammon by Joab. 2 Sam. xi. 11.

³ *Sept. Thenius.*

ing darkened, a young man rushed up the valley to the gate of Shiloh, his clothes torn, and dust on his head, in sign of deepest grief and dismay.¹ It was not necessary to tell his message. A loud wail, like that which on the announcement of any great calamity, runs through all Eastern towns, rang through the streets of the expectant city.² Making his way to Eli, the news at last came out in its terrible fulness. Israel was beaten; Hophni and Phinehas were killed; and, worse than all, the Ark of God was taken. This last announcement was overwhelming. It broke the old man's heart. Struck with a fit on the moment, he fell backward heavily from his seat, and died. Tidings of the catastrophe soon reached the house of Phinehas, and there also the announcement was fatal to his wife. Not even the birth of a living son, which presently happened, could cheer her. The "Glory of Israel" was in the hands of the uncircumcised. Her child should bear in his name a memorial of the evil day. She would call him, with her parting breath, no other than Ichabod; the land was "without its glory." God had "forsaken the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men, and delivered His Strength into captivity, and His Glory into the enemy's hand."³ The event imprinted itself on the heart of the nation, so as to be thus remembered in its psalms in after ages. An ancient manuscript of the Book of Judges, at St. Petersburg, indeed, recognises it as an epoch in the national history; recording that the image of Micah continued to be worshipped at Dan until "the day of the captivity of the Ark."⁴

Such a calamity was appalling in an age which associated the presence of God with the symbol now lost;

¹ 1 Sam. iv. 12.

² Stanley, vol. i. p. 378.

³ Ps. lxxviii. 60, 61.

⁴ Jud. xviii. 30.

perhaps for ever. To the ignorant multitude it would doubtless seem as if, in gaining the Ark, the Philistines had also secured the presence and aid of Jehovah; for this was the common idea in the ancient world. It was grievous for the tribes to have lost their God; but to find Him in the hand of their enemies, was a disaster of inexpressible magnitude.

The joy of the Philistines was in proportion to the dismay of the Hebrews. To lead off the gods of a foe was the most signal mark of victory on the one side, and of humiliation on the other. The Assyrian sculptures often exhibit the idols of vanquished nations, borne in triumphal procession by the conquerors, and the prophets frequently allude to the custom. Isaiah predicts that the gods of Babylon will go into captivity, borne ignominiously on the backs of beasts of burden or in wagons.¹ Chemosh, the god of Moab, and Milcom, the god of the Ammonites, are foretold by Jeremiah as doomed to the same disgrace, "with their priests and princes together."² The calf, worshipped by Northern Israel at Samaria, was to be carried into Assyria as a present to the king;³ and in the wars between Syria and Egypt, the gods of the former were to be carried captives into the latter.⁴ The Philistines, in the same way, led off the Ark, and placed the trophy in the shrine or chapel of their god Dagon, at Ashdod, the modern Azotus; as a recognition of his victory over Jehovah. But such spoils were held even then, by not a few, as of doubtful value; the thoughtful fearing that the hatred and vengeance of the god so insulted might be visited on his captors. Thus the wiser among the Romans criticised the conduct of Marcellus, who first brought Grecian statues and

¹ Isa. xlvi. 1.

² Jer. xlviii. 7; xlix. 3.

³ Hos. x. 6.

⁴ Dan. xi. 8.

pictures of the gods to their city to adorn his triumph; thinking better of the course followed by Fabius, who, in taking Tarentum, had told his army to leave to the Tarentines the gods offended with them.

It would, indeed, have been better for the Philistines to have acted thus, for their triumph brought the speedy humiliation of Dagon. Next morning his image was found lying on the ground before the Ark; and when it had been raised to its place again, it was found once more, on the second morning, not only cast down, but shattered



DAGON AND DERCETO.

From a Babylonian engraved stone in the British Museum.

to pieces in its upper half; only the lower being left whole, as if in contempt. Originally a sea-god, its form¹ was half human and half like a fish.² But now the human part was broken to pieces, the fish-half lay, dishonoured, on the threshold of the cell. Henceforth no one would step on the spot,³ but entered by leaping

¹ See vol. i. pp. 201-2.

² Dagon, and his consort, Derceto, were intended to embody the legend of a fish-like being who was said to have risen from the waters of the Red Sea in ancient times, and to have shown himself one of the greatest benefactors of mankind, teaching them letters and sciences, as well as arts of every kind. Lengerke traces the preservation of holy fish in some parts of Syria to the old Dagon worship. There is still a village in the Maritime Plain called Nedshan=Dagon's House. *Orelli*, p. 77. *Kanaan*, p. 200. *Smith's Chaldaean Genesis*, p. 32.

³ 1 Sam. v. 5. When the temple of Somnauth, in India, was destroyed by the Mahommedans, fragments of the gods were sent to Meccah and Medina to be laid on *the threshold* of the mosques, that they might be trodden under foot in contempt. To touch the threshold of a temple with the forehead, from humility, was usual in Egypt and in antiquity generally, and still

over it, a custom which spread even to Israel in after days.¹

But the degradation of the idol was not the only vindication of the honour of God. Ere long, a terrible plague broke out in Ashdod and its neighbourhood; for "in their land sprang up mice," a word including in the Hebrew all the small quadrupeds at any time attacking the crops.² "A great and deadly destruction," moreover, soon after broke out in the city.³ This plague is described in our version and in many besides—one following another—as that of hæmorrhoids,⁴ but it is much more likely to have been a pestilence accompanied by local swellings, such as mark the Oriental plague,⁵ and may have been caused by the devastations of the field vermin, which, Oken assures us, often cause famine by their ravages. Van Lennep, indeed, in 1863, saw whole fields of wheat and barley in Asia Minor disappear in a short time before the depredations of innumerable field

is, in the case of certain mosques, with the Mahommedans. Rosenmüller, *Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 76. The threshold of the palace in Persia is sacred, and must not be touched with the foot. Hitzig's *Zephanja*, p. 286.

¹ Zeph. i. 9.

² The Hebrew word "akbar," translated "mice" in our Bible, includes all the small rodents of Palestine, of which no fewer than 23 species are known,* and literally means "the corn eater," or "devastator of the field." †

³ 1 Sam. v. 6. *Sept.*

⁴ Called "emerods" = piles.

⁵ Thenius, and Erdmann, on 1 Sam. v. 6. In Ps. lxxviii. 66, where this incident is alluded to, the words "hinder parts" is to be translated "back," or "in their turn." Geiger. *Hupfeld. Hengstenberg.*

* *Tristram*, p. 122.

† Rosenmüller, *Bib. Naturgeschichte*, vol. ii. p. 224. Bochart, *Hierozoicon*, ed. 1794, vol. ii. p. 429.

rats, which passed over the ground like an army of young locusts. The vines and mulberry trees, also, were quickly gnawed through and overthrown. All the harvest of a farm of 150 acres, which these pests had invaded, was thus entirely destroyed, and the whole neighbourhood suffered more or less.¹ In the same way, an old traveller found such vast numbers of rats and field mice in the country from Gaza northwards, that "if nature had not provided a great plenty of birds which lived on them, the people could not have sown any seed that would not have been eaten."²

Smarting under such heavy visitations, the chiefs of the five confederate Philistine cities sent the Ark to Gath, and then to Ekron, but at both places disaster followed; so that, after it had been seven months among them, they were glad to send it back unconditionally to the Israelites. To propitiate Jehovah, it was determined, moreover, that small images in gold of the tumours and of the mice that afflicted them, should accompany it—one for each city. The custom was general in antiquity of hanging up beside the altars, in the temples, such models of parts of the body that had been healed, or of objects recalling dangers from which one had been rescued. In those of Greece, for example, silver models of eyes, legs, arms, etc., were displayed in great numbers; a custom still seen in the Greek churches of Russia, or the Roman Catholic churches of Italy or Switzerland. But in the case of the Philistines, the "images" were not like these models, thankofferings for recovery granted, for the plague still raged when they were sent off. Nor can

¹ Van Lennep, *Bible Lands*, vol. i. pp. 285-6.

² Belon, *Observat.*, vol. ii. c. 78, p. 138. Calmet, *Comment. sur 1 Rois*, c. v. p. 65. Rosenmüller, *Neue u. Alte Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 78.

they be compared to the talismans or amulets of astrologers and magicians of ancient or later times, which were regarded as charms to effect cures or avert evils, though the details respecting such wonder-working fancies are very curious.

Thus Apollonius of Tyana, made an image of a scorpion in brass, and set it on a small pillar in Antioch, with the asserted result of banishing all scorpions from the city thenceforward. Clay models of a scorpion carved on a stone in the wall of Hamath in Syria, were believed to cure that creature's bite, if laid on the injured spot. A crocodile in lead, marked by a charm, and buried in the foundations of an Egyptian temple, was thought to render the reptiles it represented harmless in the district. It is further related by Gregory of Tours, that, at the repair of an old bridge in Paris, the images of a serpent and of a mouse, in brass, were found, the removal of which was followed by the appearance of both serpents and mice in great numbers. Paracelsus, also, explains how a house may be freed from mice—"Make an iron mouse, under the conjunction of Saturn and Mars, in the house of ♃. Imprint on its belly ALBAMATATOX, etc. Then place this talisman in the middle of the house, and the vermin will instantly leave the place." He adds, that a live mouse tied to this image will die immediately.¹

The Philistine images, in contrast to such thank-offerings or charms, were representations of the instruments by which punishment had been inflicted on them, and an acknowledgment that these calamities—the field-mice and the plague—had not come by chance, but had been inflicted by the God of Israel, for their having taken His Ark into captivity. It is expressly said, indeed, that they were "a trespass offering, to give glory

¹ Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations*, vol. iii. pp. 98, 100.

to the God of Israel; if, peradventure, He would lighten His hand from off them, their gods and their land." A similar custom has prevailed from the remotest times in India. Thus Tavernier tells us, that when a pilgrim undertakes a journey to a pagoda, to be cured of a disease, he offers to the idol a present, either in gold, silver, or copper, according to his ability, in the shape of the diseased or injured member, and such a gift is recognised as a practical acknowledgment that the suffering or evil endured has been inflicted by the god.

These visible confessions of the power of Jehovah, and mute appeals to His pity, were naturally accompanied by the restoration of the Ark itself. Set on a new cart, doubtless of the rude form still universal in Western Asia, with solid wooden wheels—two milch cows, which had never been used for labour, were yoked to the vehicle; their calves being shut up at home. If, notwithstanding this, they went on towards Beth-shemesh, the border village of Israel, such a contradiction of their natural instincts would show that what had been suffered had come from Jehovah. The incident is marked by the simplicity of the age. Attended by the five "Seranim," or princes of the Philistine cities, the cart, with its awful burden, was drawn straight to Beth-shemesh. It was June—so that the Ark had been taken in November—and the wheat was being harvested as it approached. But the sight was too gladsome to let work be longer thought of, and the reapers in the valley came, rejoicing, to meet it, when it was seen slowly wending up the long valley. Beth-shemesh was a Levitical town, so that Levites, the natural guardians of the Ark, at once received it with fitting reverence, laying it and the Philistine coffer, with its jewels, on a great stone hard by, and building a hasty altar, on which the wood of the cart

was laid for fuel, and the cows that had drawn it were offered as a sacrifice of grateful joy. But even amidst this general gladness there were some who, either from sheer irreverence, or from the deep taint of heathenism then prevailing, stood aloof. "The sons of Jechoniah," says the Septuagint, "did not rejoice amongst the men of Beth-shemesh when they saw the Ark of the Lord; and He smote of them three-score and ten men." In our version the number is given as 50,070,¹ but this is clearly an error of some copyist, as the whole population of a village like Beth-shemesh could not have been anything like that number.

The results of the battle in which the Ark was lost had been sad indeed for Israel. Following up their success, the Philistines seem to have subdued the whole country, as far north as Dan; the destruction of the local sanctuary there being incidentally dated, as we have seen, from the captivity of the Ark.² Shiloh, the religious capital, was speedily laid in ashes, though the watchful care of the Levites carried off the Tabernacle in safety before the approach of the invaders. A town had grown up round the sanctuary, as at its former site in Gilgal, and buildings had been raised beside it, for the priests and Levites, till it had assumed almost the appearance, and bore the name of, a temple.³ But from the death of Eli, the last high priest who had his seat there,⁴ it lost all importance and sank into obscurity. Built on a hill, with a pleasant valley to the south, but surrounded with higher hills on all other sides, it had been for centuries the national holy place of Israel. Five and a half hours north from Bethel, it lay in the heart of the land.

¹ 1 Sam. vi. 19.

² Jud. xviii. 30. See p. 28.

³ 1 Sam. i. 9. Its being raised on a stone wall (p. 37) tended further, to make it like a temple.

⁴ 1 Sam. xiv. 3.

Thither the faithful had come, year after year, for the great feast, and to pour out their burdened hearts, like Hannah, before God.¹ There, they had presented their offerings; holding their festival on the portion of the victim which they were allowed to retain,² and rejoicing together “before the Lord” in the great holiday of their lives. In the vineyards on the slopes and in the valley — now barren and dry—the young men and maidens had held their merry-makings and dances.³ At Shiloh, also, there is little doubt, the victories of the nation had been celebrated with a proud display of the chief prisoners and of the most noble booty; a prophetess like Deborah chanting her “song” at its head. Ewald has pictured such a scene—the incidents of the day beginning in the still of the morning with a song of thanks to Jehovah, who alone gave victory to His people—such a song as that for the triumph over Sisera,—composed for the occasion. This *Te Deum* ended, the great triumphal procession would sweep along, with rejoicings and songs of its own, caught up by the multitude, and filling the air with gladness.⁴ But all this was now over. Shiloh lingered indeed, in insignificance, not wholly deserted,⁵ but gradually sinking to such desolation that its fate was cited by the prophets as a warning to those who trusted

¹ What feasts were kept at Shiloh is not known. Nehemiah* says that the Feast of Tabernacles had not been kept from the days of Joshua till his time, but this refers only to the manner of keeping it—with huts of branches. Only three cases of the observance of the Passover are mentioned after Joshua’s death, to the Babylonish captivity—under Solomon, 2 Chron. viii. 13; under Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxx. 15; and under Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 21, and 2 Chron. xxxv. 1-19.

² 1 Sam. ii. 13.

³ Jud. xxi. 21.

⁴ *Ewald*, vol. ii. p. 533.

⁵ 1 Kings xi. 29. Jer. xli. 5.

* viii. 17.

in the safety of Jerusalem from its possessing the Temple.¹ "Go now," cries Jeremiah, speaking for God, "to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel."² So entirely, indeed, had it vanished in still early times, that even its site remained unknown till our own day, when Dr. Robinson rediscovered it, by the exact detail given in Judges,³ and by the touching fidelity with which its name was cherished under the form of Seilun.⁴

Its ruins lie on the top of a gentle slope, covered in summer with fields of grain. A small village still crowns the hill, and some ancient stones are to be seen built into modern walls.⁵ In one part the ground has been levelled over a space 77 feet wide and 412 feet long, the rock having in some places been cut into to the depth of 5 feet—and this probably marks the site of the Tabernacle, as it is the only level spot on the "tell" large enough for it. Here, then, in all likelihood, on the north side of the ancient town, rose the sacred tent—the last memorial of the desert life—resting, say the Rabbis, on an understructure of low stone walls—the first approach to a permanent temple. A few small excavations and cisterns; numerous rock-hewn tombs; an old and now useless reservoir for the spring of Seilun, three-quarters of a mile off, also cut in the rock; and half-way down the slope, a broad terrace, over which rises a venerable oak, casting wide its broad and grateful shadow—are the only memorials left of the once busy home of Eli and Samuel. ■

¹ Jer. vii. 14; xxvi. 6, 9. ² Jer. vii. 12. ³ Jud. xxi. 19.

⁴ Robinson, *Bib. Res.*, vol. ii. p. 269.

⁵ Furrer, *Wanderungen*, p. 125.

⁶ *Pal. Fund Rep.* 1873, pp. 37, 38. Furrer, p. 226. *Tent Work*, p. 44.

The history of the Tabernacle after its removal from Shiloh is obscure. It never again boasted of the Ark, but the priests still clung to it, and some portions of its ritual, at least, were kept up. For a time it seems, under Saul, to have been erected at Nob—which, like “Mizpeh,” means a “height” or “watch-tower,” and is thought by many to have been the same as the place known by the latter name. It lay on the main north road, apparently in sight of Jerusalem.¹ But after the massacre of the priests by Saul,² Abiathar, the high priest, fled from it, taking with him the ephod and the oracular Urim and Thummim. It next appears at Gibeon, two or three miles north of Nob, where it remained till the capture of Jerusalem by David, and his erection in the new capital, of a second tabernacle, to which the Ark was removed.³ The old sacred tent had now only the altar of burnt-offerings⁴ to connect it with the venerable past, and retained little more than a traditional sanctity. Neither people nor king, however, could bring themselves to destroy a historical memorial so precious, and hence a double service was kept up, by Zadok, as high priest at Gibeon,⁵ and under Asaph, with psalms, hymns, and music, on a fuller scale than heretofore, at Jerusalem.⁶ But with the building of Solomon’s Temple the lingering glories of the old Tabernacle finally perished, and it vanishes from history.⁷

After its restoration at Beth-shemesh the Ark was soon removed to Kirjath-jearim—“the town of the woods,” about five miles east of Beth-shemesh,⁸—and found a resting-place in the house of one Abinadab, a Levite, who,

¹ Isa. x. 32. Conder’s *Handbook*, p. 277. ² 1 Sam. xxii. 17.

³ 2 Sam. vi. 17. 1 Chron. xv. 1.

⁴ 1 Chron. xxi. 29.

⁵ 1 Chron. xvi. 39.

⁶ 1 Chron. xvi. 4, 37

⁷ *Ewald*, vol. ii. p. 585.

⁸ *Conder*, p. 259.

in the abeyance of the priesthood, consecrated his son Eleazar as its guardian.¹ There it remained for twenty years, till David “found it in the fields of the wood,” and having “prepared an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob,” finally brought it to Jerusalem.

¹ 1 Sam. vii. 2.





CHAPTER III.

SAMUEL AND THE RISE OF THE PROPHETS.

THE condition of Israel, both morally and politically, had sunk to its darkest and worst in the early days of Samuel. The Ark was in the hands of her enemies; Shiloh, the national religious centre, burnt; and the Philistines, stimulated by their past success, were pushing on to the conquest of the whole country. Unhappily, the isolation of the different tribes prevented united resistance. Hence those of the south were soon completely crushed, and not only disarmed and made tributary, but forced to serve in the Philistine ranks against their countrymen.¹ To check any future rising, moreover, every smith's forge where a sword might be rudely made or a spear-head pointed, was shut up, and the people forced to go down from the hills to the Philistine towns on the plain if they wished so much as a ploughshare sharpened.² Indeed, as early as Samson's day the great tribe of Judah had been so utterly cowed as to lend itself actively, at the command of a Philistine officer, to the capture of the hero, and his surrender to the common enemy.³ Ere long,

¹ 1 Sam. xiv. 21.

² 1 Sam. xiii. 19-21.

³ Jud. xv. 11. The rock Etam, "the eagle's nest," is the present Beit Atab, west of Bethlehem. The words "the top of the rock" should be "the fissure or cleft of the crag." Beit Atab stands on

fortified posts at Michmash—the present Mukhmas—8 miles north of Jerusalem,¹ and at Geba, a hill close by, made the subjugation still more absolute.² The south thus thoroughly overpowered, the Philistines in Eli's time had proceeded to attack the central tribes, and at last broke their power and made them tributary, by the great battle of Aphek, when the Ark was taken and Shiloh given to the flames.³ Twenty years of Philistine oppression followed,⁴ and it seemed as if the whole land were finally to pass into the hands of that race, and Israel to perish as a nation. At this hour of deepest darkness rose Samuel—the prophet—its destined saviour.

Brought to the tent-temple at Shiloh in early childhood,⁵ the future reformer and restorer of his people—a Levite by birth⁶—had been surrounded from his infancy by religious influences. The yearly visits of his mother, moreover—a woman nobly true to Jehovah, and as such, as well as by natural sentiment, filled with sorrow and indignation to see her country, God's own land, trampled under foot by the uncircumcised alien—must have turned

a conspicuous and rugged knoll of rock above a deep valley, Under the village is a long tunnel to which a Hebrew name, meaning “the Cave of Refuge,” still attaches. It is close to the principal spring, and may well be the “cleft” in which Samson hid. *Great Map of Palestine*, Sheet 17. See *Pal. Fund Report*, 1881, p. 43.

¹ Kiepert's Map.

² 1 Sam. xiii. 2, 3.

³ 1 Sam. iv. 3. Jer. vii. 12.

⁴ 1 Sam. vii. 2.

⁵ Graetz says that the words, “and the child was young” (1 Sam. i. 24), should be “and the child waked up,” having till then been asleep in its mother's arms. *Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 148.

⁶ This is questioned by Hossbach in *Bib. Lex.*, art. *Samuel*, but the arguments of Nägelsbach in *Herzog*, art. *Samuel*, seem convincing in its favour. See also 1 Chron. vi. 27, 28. Samuel sprang from one of the highest Levitical families, that of Korah, who had risen against Moses. *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 148.

his thoughts into lofty channels. The sacredness of his position, as pledged for life to the service of Jehovah, and consecrated by a vow of perpetual Nazarite devotion to Him, could not fail to affect him powerfully. His long hair, never touched by scissors; his required abstinence from wine; the purity demanded of him, which forbade his approach to the dead, even if the nearest relation, would keep this consecration always before him. But it must have been pre-eminently the sacred influence of his mother's character that made him what he was, if we may judge from the fact that her memory remained so dear to him to the close of his long life, that even in old age we find him still wearing a "coat" like the one she had brought him year by year in his childhood.¹

The state of things, both religious and political, must have impressed itself deeply on a mind trained under such influences. The profligacy of Eli's sons; the dissolution of morals in the community at large; the too general prevalence of a licentious and gross idolatry; the weakness of Eli as Judge and his unfitness for the times, could not fail to be noted. Doubtless also there were some among the priests and Levites of Shiloh who remained true to Jehovah, and sighed over the national and spiritual decay around them, and Samuel may well have caught their spirit. In the Ark, while it was still in the sanctuary, there were, moreover, the two tables of the commandments and the Book of the Law, and it cannot be questioned that, while he would from the first know the commands and prohibitions of the former, he carefully studied the latter day by day, for his future life was one

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 19; xxiv. 14. The woman at Endor says, "An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a *mantle*." This is the same garment as in the earlier text, and Saul knows him by it at once.

long effort to revive its principles in the nation, and to enforce the observance of its requirements.

In those evil days, among other signs of religious decay, there were no longer, as in former times, revelations from Jehovah. "There was no vision" "scattered abroad" to prophets.¹ When Divine communications were first made to him, he knew so little of them that it was only after instruction from Eli—when the Voice had already spoken thrice—that he learned whence it came. His final answer, however, "Speak, Lord; Thy servant heareth," showed his spiritual fitness for the honour vouchsafed him. Though the first revelation he had received from God, it presupposed a nature already in inner communion with Him, for to such only does He reveal Himself thus. Henceforth, however, similar disclosures were often repeated, till, even while Eli still lived, all Israel, "from Dan to Beersheba," felt that God was once more revealed at Shiloh, and that in Samuel they had a prophet, none of whose words fell to the ground.²

After the disastrous battle of Aphek, Samuel seems to have returned to his father's house at Ramah, doubtless greatly troubled and distressed. To Israel and to the Philistines alike, if not to him, it would seem that, with the Ark, God Himself had been led into captivity. In the Levitical circle in which he had grown up it would be taken for granted that the catastrophe was a punishment for national apostasy. They must have regarded it as almost equivalent to God having forsaken His people. Samuel, however, appears to have familiarized himself with what he could not remedy, and to have turned his

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 1. *Gesenius*. Bunsen (*Bibel Urkunden*, vol. i. p. 519) thinks the prophets had sunk into mere soothsayers.

² 1 Sam. iii. 19, 20.

thoughts in another direction. Mere regret was idle; true wisdom could only concern itself with the practical necessities of the situation. The cessation of offerings by the destruction of the sanctuary, would soon suggest to a mind so imbued with the spirit of the Law, whether, after all, they were indispensable to the pure worship of God or to a holy life. The formal would be felt wholly subordinate in religion to the spiritual, and the highest fulfilment of the Law would present itself as that of the heart and life. This elevation of the moral above the external, indeed, was the great characteristic of the prophetic order of which he was to be the founder, and the permanent safeguard against the substitution of outward form for the vitality of inner religion. "Hath Jehovah," asked he, of Saul, in after years, "as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and (the worship of) Teraphim."¹ The truest reverence for God is loving obedience to His commands, and these were embodied in the Book of the Law which Samuel had so deeply studied in Shiloh. The ceremonial was no doubt prescribed in it, and had its place in the religious economy. But it was outward at best. Far more vital than ritual service was hearty loyalty to the "Ten Words" spoken by God from Sinai, of which the whole moral and spiritual teaching of the Law was only the amplification. Israel could not have been separated from the nations merely to present formal offerings and sacrifices to Jehovah, or to pay Him external homage. They must have been thus set apart that, like Abraham, they should "keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23. *Lit.*

judgment;¹ and obey His voice, and keep His charge, His commandments, His statutes, and His laws.”²

Such ponderings would have only one result in a mind like that of Samuel. Realizing for himself that loyalty to God was the first duty of man and the condition of all true well-being, he must have felt it, from his opening manhood, the work of his life as a prophet, to bring back his nation to their ancient faith. His position and training shaped his career, and predestined him to be a Reformer. It was a gigantic task, but amidst much to discourage there were still some gleams of light. Two great objects must be gained before a true reformation could be effected. Its first condition was the restoration of political independence. The worship of Jehovah could not be reinstated and rooted in a community enslaved by the heathen. National spirit must therefore be rekindled, that the tribes might gain power to strike for freedom by their union and mutual sympathy. But this could only be attained by rousing a common religious feeling. Zeal for Jehovah, such as that of their fathers, would at once infuse into all hearts a distinctive enthusiasm which would give them vigour in action, and would restore a grand ideal of individual and national life. The times were ripe for such a movement. Centuries of anarchy and suffering, from disunion, had prepared the people to subordinate their long-cherished fondness for tribal life to a wider national sentiment. The offer of the crown to Gideon, nearly 200 years before, had shown that this feeling was even then growing, and Eli's position, as at once Judge and high priest, proved that the desire for a centralized authority was now becoming paramount. Nor had proofs been wanting through the whole period of the Judges that the national spirit, though in abey-

¹ Gen. xviii. 19.

² Gen. xxvi. 5.

ance, was still a strong latent force. Year by year the tribes had gathered at Shiloh; there had been a wide rallying in support of Deborah and Barak; in the civil war against Benjamin all the tribes had acted with a fatal unanimity; and the fame of Samuel as a great prophet had been hailed with equal delight in every part of the land. The earnest appeals of prophets in past days had, moreover, sunk into many hearts, for men had not forgotten how their fathers had wept at Bochim, when reproved by one,¹ or how the words of another, at a later date, had led them, for the time, to put away the gods of the heathen from among them and serve Jehovah,² amidst deep confession of sin and promises of amendment. The words of Hannah's prayer, on leaving Samuel in the Tabernacle, revealed, also, a depth of religious feeling among some at least, which secured efficient help, from the first, in bringing about a great Revival. For what might not be hoped from a race, one of whose mothers could utter such thoughts³ in such words?

"My heart rejoices in Jehovah!
Exalted is my horn in Jehovah!"⁴

¹ Jud. ii. 1-5.

² Jud. x. 16.

³ Ewald ascribes Hannah's song to a later period, but his criticisms are ably met by Dr. Erdmann in his *Die Bücher Samuelis*, on 1 Sam. ii. 1-10.

⁴ The "horn" is a figure taken from the animal world, in which the horns, borne high on the head, seem a symbol of strength and courage. In Hannah this confidence is derived from Jehovah and rests on Him. The women of Beirût and of the Lebanon still wear a silver horn about a foot long on their forehead. In Abyssinia a horn of silver, or silver-gilt, is worn on great occasions by governors of provinces, and the same custom has been noticed even among the North American Indians. Such a horn was worn by the presiding chief at the interview with William Penn, which resulted in the settlement of Pennsylvania. Daniel

My mouth is opened wide (in a cry of victory) over mine enemies :
For I rejoice in Thy salvation.

No one is holy as Jehovah,
For there is no God beside Thee !
No God is a Rock like our God.

Talk not so exceeding proudly ;
Put away haughtiness from your lips ;
For Jehovah is a God who knows all things,
And by Him men's deeds are weighed.

Heroes of the bow are struck with dismay ;
But the weak are girded with strength ;
The full hire themselves for bread ;
But they that were hungry rejoice ;
The barren woman bears seven,
But she of many sons fades away.
Jehovah kills and makes alive ;
Brings down to the underworld, and raises from it.

Jehovah makes poor and makes rich,
He brings low and raises up ;
He raises the weak out of the dust,
He lifts up the poor from the mire,
To give them thrones among princes ;
And place them on the seat of honour.
For the foundations of the earth are Jehovah's ;
On them has He set the world.

He will keep the feet of His saints,
But the wicked go down into darkness ;
For by his strength shall no man prevail.
Jehovah !—confounded are they who contend with Him ;

and St. John represent powerful kingdoms under the image of horns (Dan. vii. 7 ; Rev. xiii. 1-11). The false prophet "made him horns of iron," to indicate that the Syrians would flee before Ahab. In another use of the same figure God is called "the horn of our salvation,"—the means of procuring it by His almighty power in vanquishing our foes.

Out of heaven He thunders on them.
Jehovah will judge the ends of the earth,
To give the victory to His king,
To exalt the horn of His anointed."¹

This utterance strikes the key note of Samuel's life; picturing the misery of his people, but filled with a lofty confidence in Jehovah that He will roll away their reproach and raise them to more than their ancient glory. The mind that bodied forth its inmost thoughts thus, must have yearned above all things that her son should be the hero of his race, to whom, under Jehovah, it would owe its salvation, and the aspiration of the mother coloured the life of the boy, for

"The childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day."²

Hannah's lofty patriotism, rooted in the noblest Puritanism, would, moreover, doubtless be re-echoed by some at least of the women about the Tabernacle to whom the care of the Nazarite infant was committed, and thus the atmosphere he breathed would insensibly influence his whole future.

There is a tradition that Samuel's first vision was granted when he was twelve years old—the age at which our Lord spoke with the Rabbis in the Temple. He had been separated from the mass of men, even as a child, by the Nazarite vow made for him, and by his priestly dress and Levite birth, but, as has been said, his being chosen thus early as the vehicle of Divine communications implies his already possessing a spiritual fitness to receive them. The defeat of Israel, and the death of Eli and his sons, with the overwhelming calamities that followed, finally

¹ *Ewald, and Erdmann.*

² *Paradise Regained*, Bk. iv. 220.

determined his career, for it left the tribes without a sanctuary, and virtually without a high priest; Ahitub, the eldest son of Phinehas, being too young for the office. The one leader to whom the nation had to look could be no other than he whom Jehovah Himself had marked out as such, by having already constituted him His prophet. At the death of Eli, therefore, he naturally took his place at the head of Israel, acting as Judge, apparently before his formal recognition as such by his countrymen, and even performed the duties of priest¹ when necessity demanded. That he should have done so, was indeed inevitable, for the regular priesthood was in abeyance by the death of Eli. But it shows, still further, the confusion and unsettledness of the times; for Samuel had no right, as a mere Levite, to discharge priestly functions. As yet, however, the state of things which we see in Micah's sanctuary and Gideon's ephod, had not passed away. Other great leaders of the nation had been only warriors, but Samuel was, above all, a Prophet; they had limited their work to soldierly deeds, his ideas were much wider and deeper. With the instinct of a profoundly religious nature he saw that the one condition of national regeneration was the renewal of a healthy moral and spiritual tone in the people at large. Like John the Baptist and the better Rabbis, in after times, he insisted, as a first step, on individual repentance of past sins and future loyalty to Jehovah, and it is his special glory that he, in the end, breathed a new life into the nation by impressing on it these great truths. From the depth of weakness and despondency he led it into the path which in the next generation raised it, under David, to the highest glory it ever attained. If Moses was the first founder of the state, Samuel was the second.

¹ 1 Sam. vii. 9; ix. 12; x. 8, etc.

Such a revolution in the inner life of a people could only have been accomplished by slow degrees. Stolid indifference, unthinking lightness, old habits of thoughts, the dislike of strictness, and the bias to idolatry are not easily overcome. But Samuel had the moral greatness which ensured him success. He set himself to educate his countrymen in his own lofty and pure conceptions of individual and national duty; enforcing the teachings of the Law as the supreme standard of obligation towards God and their neighbours, and, at the same time, carrying out with unbending sternness its denunciations of idolatry as a crime against the invisible King of Israel. Details of the means employed are not given, but some equivalent to our modern preaching was doubtless the chief. Gifted with a ready and forcible eloquence, he had the faculty of rousing slumbering spirits. The elders of tribes or clans, who from time to time sought his counsel, would carry back to their homes new thoughts and aspirations, to spread through their neighbourhoods. Enthusiasm alone makes others enthusiastic, and Samuel must have glowed with it to kindle such a spirit as gradually pervaded the nation. Speaking, as a prophet, in the name of Jehovah, and strengthening his appeals and protests by the visions and revelations accorded him, he had the vantage ground of universally admitted inspiration. Communicated at first to the circle around him at Shiloh, or Ramah, his announcements of the Divine will, whether disclosing the future or sent to rouse and warn, and his expositions of the Law, would be carried through the land. This would be the more easy from the form in which, no doubt, they were delivered; the striking parable, the measured and rhythmical expression; perhaps the vivid symbolical action which marked the prophets after him, in all probability impressing his words on his

hearers. Kindled by utterances so momentous in themselves and so strikingly enforced, it is no wonder his fame as a great prophet had been established while Eli still lived.¹ Men repeated to each other over all the land that the Spirit of Jehovah which had rested on Moses rested also on the son of Elkanah. There had been no prophet in the higher sense of the word since the death of their first great leader, and the fact that a second Moses had now been raised up, excited the hopes of all that a better time was at hand.

It was, indeed, the special distinction of Samuel that with him began the long roll-call of the Jewish prophets as the name is generally applied. Abraham, and even the patriarchs as a whole, had been honoured with the title,² because they had been favoured with visions and dreams from God, and were thus in direct communication with Him. Miriam and Deborah had been called prophetesses, the seventy elders, and Eldad and Medad, had prophesied, and from time to time messengers of God bearing the name of prophets had delivered Divine warnings to the people, but the inspiration thus vouchsafed had been partial and intermittent, and left a broad distinction between the office as it was known before Samuel and from his time.

The prophet is essentially an appearance peculiar to early ages and to the simple state of society before the fulness of revelation has yet been made known. The ancient world at large was marked by its eager efforts to

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 19-21. The Sept. reads: "And the Lord was pleased to be served in Shiloh, because the Lord was revealed to Samuel by the word of the Lord. And Samuel was trusted as a prophet to all Israel from one end of the land to the other, and Eli was very old, and his sons kept on in their course, and their way was evil before the Lord."

² Gen. xx. 7. Ps. cv. 15.

penetrate the secrets of the higher powers which control human destiny. Nothing important was undertaken either in public or private life without inquiring the will of the gods, through seers, diviners, augurs, oracles, or prophets, who claimed ability to satisfy this craving. But there was a signal difference between the representatives of the heathen gods and those of Jehovah. To the former the indications of the Divine will were read in the phenomena and occurrences of outer nature and of the animal world; in the whispering of the oak leaves at Dodona, in the flight of birds, in the motions of the entrails of a sacrifice, in the sounds of birds or beasts, or in their unexpected appearances. But in the true religion, this noble instinct was met only by communications made from the unseen God through the spirit of man, His image on earth. The superstitious arts by which the knowledge of the future was generally sought were all alike branded by Moses as unholy. Augurs and diviners had no place in Israel, nor was any other medium of inquiry from God sanctioned but the Urim and Thummim, which seem to have been part of the full official costume of the high priest. The prophet takes the place of all enchanters and magicians.¹ Any human power of divination is repudiated, and all disclosures of the purposes of God are due to direct communications from Himself. He alone, in fact, can prophesy; the prophet is only His voice among men.² As He had adopted Israel as His covenant people in the past, founding their State and determining their mission, He still made Himself known among them, to help forward His plan of mercy to the world, and the prophets were the instruments through whom He did so.

¹ Num. xxiii. 23. Deut. xviii. 9-22.

² Isa. xli. 23; xlv. 7, 8; xlviii. 14, 15

Before Samuel, the prophets had been known as "seers,"¹ but from his time the name of Nabi, which has passed over into all other Semitic languages, was given as a title of honour. It comes from a root, "to boil up," "to boil forth" like a fountain, and thus hints at the prophet as one who utters his words under the irrepressible influence of a Divine communication. His heart, to use the words of the Psalmist, as they are in the Hebrew, "bursts and bubbles over with a good matter."² He is "moved" or inspired "by the Holy Ghost," a phrase which in itself implies the same irresistible impulse to speak what was thus communicated to him, for the very word ghost—geist—is the same as the heaving, fermenting *yeast*, or the boiling, steaming *geyser*.³ He is, in fact, constrained to be the "proclaimer," or the "announcer," and thus corresponds closely to the idea embodied in the Greek word "prophet,"—"one who speaks for another," that is, for a God; or in the Roman "vates,"⁴ "the speaker." The idea of foretelling is thus not fundamentally implied, though the revelation of the future, in many cases through the prophet, must have connected this sense also with the word from the first. Strictly, however, he is simply the "mouth" or "spokesman" for God, as Aaron was for Moses.⁵ What he utters is in no way his own; it is "the word of Jehovah," in whom, for the time, his own personality is lost. Jehovah "puts His

¹ Roim and Hozim. Both words refer to the visions "seen" by the prophets, but the former is the old word: the latter is rather a poetical expression of the silver age of Hebrew. 1 Sam ix. 9.

² Ps. xlv. 1.

³ Müller's *Science of Language*, 2nd ed. p. 386.

⁴ Vates is connected with the Greek "phates," "speaking, discoursing," and comes originally from the Sans. "vad," "to speak."

⁵ Exod. iv. 16; vii. 1. Jer. i. 9. Ezek. ii. 8.

words in his mouth," nor can he speak as a prophet till a message is thus communicated to him from above.¹ Sometimes, indeed, he receives no "vision" even when one was expected.²

The Spirit of God, from whom flows all natural and spiritual life, is specially indicated in Scripture as the source of prophetic inspiration. He "comes" on the prophet, "rests" on him, "fills him with power," inspires him, or creates him "a man of the Spirit," making him speak as he is "moved," that is, literally borne along, as a ship is before the wind, by the resistless power of "the Holy Ghost." The "hand of Jehovah" is on him and overpowers him, so that he "can but prophesy," even when he has to do so against his will.³ In many cases, when thus filled with the prophetic spirit, he passes into a state of high mental excitement. Thus Saul, when for the time inspired, was so affected as to tear the clothes from his body, "and fall down naked all that day and all that night."⁴ He "hears the word of God, and sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down," prostrated by the prophetic impulse, but "having his eyes open."⁵ To use the words applied to Saul, he was "turned into another

¹ Jer. xlii. 4, 7. Lam. ii. 9. Hab. ii. 1.

² Num. xi. 25, 26. 1 Sam. x. 6, 10; xix. 20, 23. Hos. ix. 7. Mic. iii. 8. 2 Pet. i. 21.

³ Ezek. i. 3; iii. 22; viii. 3. 2 Kings xiii. 15. Jer. viii. 11. Ezek. iii. 14. Amos iii. 8. Jer. xvii. 16. Jonah i. 1-3.

⁴ 1 Sam. xix. 24. "Naked" means, here, as often, see subsequent note, stripped of his outer garment.

⁵ Num. xxiv. 4. Dean Stanley illustrates the "visions" of prophets by the "visions or apparitions which in Christian times have produced remarkable conversions: as of the cross to Constantine and to Col. Gardiner, and of the voices to St. Augustine." *Jewish Church*, vol. i. p. 425. He might have added the visions of Mr. Grimshaw of Haworth, and Mr. Tennant of Georgia.

man.”¹ So often indeed did this happen, that the people not unfrequently spoke of a prophet as one who was mad.² The word used for Saul’s prophesying is that for being frenzied or insane.³ In Daniel’s case the prophetic vision overpowered him, and brought on sickness for days.⁴ Revelations frequently came in dreams, which were recognised as from God,⁵ but this was a lower form of inspiration; the greatest prophets commonly receiving the Divine communications when awake.⁶ The spirit was cut off from the outer world, but the eye saw and the ear heard what the senses could not perceive, when the prophetic impulse was absent. It was in fact a “vision,” but the human intellect was not clouded, though carried beyond its common sphere. The prophet remembered the vision after it ended; and, even while it lasted, the clearest personal consciousness⁷ and all the emotions remained as active as in ordinary men; though intercourse with the world around was for the time interrupted.

While thus, in a sense, passive and merely receptive, the prophet needed special fitness and preparation for his office. But these were in no way external. He might be of any social rank, or appear in any part of the land.

¹ 1 Sam. x. 6.

² 2 Kings ix. 11. Jer. xxix. 26. Hos. ix. 7.

³ 1 Sam. xviii. 10. See *Kiel, Thenius, Gesenius*.

⁴ Dan. viii. 27.

⁵ Num. xii. 6. Deut. xiii. 2. 1 Sam. xxviii. 6, 15. Job iv. 13. Joel iii. 1.

⁶ 1 Sam. iii. 3, 4. 2 Sam. vii. 4. Zech. i. 1; iv. 1. “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even visibly, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold” (Num. xii. 6, 8). Thus Moses was almost more than a prophet

⁷ Isa. vi. Jer. i.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and John the Baptist were priests; Moses, Samuel, Jahaziel, Heman, and apparently Joel, were Levites, yet there was nothing sacerdotal even in them: unlike the Egyptian prophets, who were a class of priests. But the great majority were laymen. Moses, Deborah, and Samuel, were the heads of the nation under the old theocracy; Saul and David were kings. Elisha was a rich landowner, with servants and cattle. Elijah comes before us like a wandering Bedouin.¹ Amos was a shepherd at Tekoah, ten miles south of Jerusalem, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit,² or rather "a cutter," for the "figs" of the sycomore are too bitter for eating till they have been cut into, so that the acrid juice may ooze out for some days.³ Than such a calling, it need not be said, there could scarcely be a more humble. Women as well as men were filled with the prophetic impulse—Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna, and the four daughters of Philip. The claim of Israel to be a nation of priests and a holy people, received no grander vindication than in the choice of prophets from among all the tribes, and over the whole land. There could be no caste in a community thus impartially honoured by God—all must be equal before him. Samuel came from the mountains of Ephraim; Gad and Nathan seem to have lived in Jerusalem. After the division of the kingdom, prophets were for a time most numerous among the ten tribes, Judah holding more firmly to the theocracy. In the rapidly apostatizing northern kingdom, Shiloh, Bethel, Samaria, Naphtali, Gilead, Issachar, and Zebulon, alike saw prophets rise in their midst. But when the ten tribes had been led into captivity, and Judah itself was fast sinking

¹ 1 Kings xix. 19.

² Amos vii. 14.

³ The word "gather" means to "cut." See art. *Maulbeerfeigenbaum*, by Furrer, in *Schenkel*.

into heathenism, not only Jerusalem, but many localities near it, saw men rise, on whom the mysterious gifts of the prophetic spirit had been bestowed.

As Wycliffe and Wesley promoted their great movements in England by the appointment of a body of evangelists who should spread through the country the doctrines taught by their masters, Samuel established what modern divines have called "Schools of the Prophets," to promote the reformation so near his heart. That such institutions should be possible, is a noteworthy proof that there must already have been a vigorous revival of religious life, for they could flourish only when there was a sympathy with spiritual truth. Of their origin, aim, constitution, and history, the Old Testament gives few details. Those who attended them were known as "sons" or "disciples," a term afterwards used for the followers of a Rabbi,¹ and their chief for the time was called "father."² Most of them seem to have been young, and indeed are spoken of as such.³ They lived in communities, ate in common,⁴ went abroad in companies,⁵ and were so numerous, at least at a later time, that Ahab could assemble 400 at once;⁶ that 100 were hidden in a cave by Obadiah;⁷ that 100 are mentioned in connection with the community at Jericho; and 100 more who, at the same period, lived at Gilgal. The only "schools" of which we know were at Ramah, Samuel's town in the hills of Ephraim, at Bethel, and Gilgal—also in Ephraim—and at Gibeah and Jericho in the tribe of Benjamin, places in the heart of the land. All the prophets, however, at least in after times, did not live in these centres,

¹ Mal. xii. 27. Mark x. 24. ² 1 Sam. x. 12. 1 Kings xx. 35.

³ 2 Kings v. 22; ix. 1, 4. ⁴ 2 Kings iv. 40.

⁵ 1 Sam. x. 5, 10, 19, 20. ⁶ 1 Kings xxii. 6.

⁷ 1 Kings xviii. 4.

for Isaiah had a house in Jerusalem, and Elisha his in Samaria. The great local prophetic settlements were under the care of older and well-known prophets,¹ to whom the "sons" rendered due obedience and respect, members of the company waiting on them as their personal attendants when they went abroad.² Nor was fatherly care wanting towards them in return, for Elisha at one time fed no fewer than a hundred,³ and on one dying, provided his widow means of paying his debts.⁴ They lived apparently, in some cases, by agriculture or cattle feeding;⁵ and, doubtless, in many others, like the Rabbis in later ages, by their own industry in various callings, though they also received modest gifts from those who visited them. Admission to a company appears to have been readily granted where there seemed to be a spiritual fitness for the prophet's life. They were generally married, as we know from the instances of Moses, Deborah, Samuel, David, Nathan, Ahijah, Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel;⁶ leaving the community perhaps, as a rule, on their marriage, but sometimes remaining connected with it even after.⁷

The object of these associations, as founded by Samuel, was, pre-eminently, to further the great movement for restoring and firmly establishing the ancient faith. Of the special pursuits which engaged them little is told; but we may be certain that, among others, music and singing were included, as aids to heighten the emotions, and rouse themselves and their hearers to a higher religious sensi-

¹ 2 Kings ii. 3, 16; iv. 1, 43; vi. 3; ix. 1, 15, 16.

² 2 Kings iii. 11, 22.

³ 2 Kings iv. 42-44.

⁴ 2 Kings iv. 1.

⁵ 2 Kings iv. 39.

⁶ It was the same under Christ. Zacharias, Anna, and all the apostles, it is said, except John and Paul, were married.

⁷ 2 Kings iv. 1.

bility. The chief study, however, was the Law, not only in the letter but in its spirit, as the one source of all true religious feeling, and the basis of comprehensive theocratic ideas. Under the constant influence of their head, a Master prophet if we may so speak, this must have been of supreme influence in the development of their character and views. It would be a mistake, however, to think of all the prophets as necessarily trained in such schools, for Amos expressly tells us that he had had no connection with them, but had been seized by the prophetic impulse while engaged in his lowly calling.¹ Skill in instrumental music, including that of the "psaltery, the tabret, the pipe, and the harp,"² as an accompaniment to prophetic utterance or to religious hymns,³ distinguished the order. Its members must, moreover, in such communities, have acquired a varied knowledge of men and things, an intimate familiarity with the moral and spiritual aspects of the Law, habits of lowly devotion, and an earnest theocratic bias, of the greatest value for their future office. Even the associations around, the influence of their leader, the very spirit of the place, as subordinate aids to their efficiency, must have helped to mould them for their work. But the one vital necessity was that they should be in living communion of spirit with Jehovah, for such only could be His true prophets.⁴ That they should fear God was the first requirement, and as it were their public credential. Nor is it in any measure a proof to the contrary, that Balaam, after seeing Israel, was forced against his will to bless its hosts, and to predict their magnificent future. It is only an evidence of the resistless power of truth, even over the perverseness of heathen inclinations. The true

¹ Amos vii. 14.

³ 1 Chron. xxv. 1.

² 1 Sam. x. 5.

⁴ Deut. xiii. 2-6.

prophet is always marked by his enthusiasm for God, His religion, His kingdom, His honour; by firm faith; deep love for His people; zeal and inflexible constancy in working for the Divine purposes; hatred of all that is evil, and the strictest purity, uprightness, and sincerity. Only the heart thus at one with God could be made His oracle. The communications vouchsafed must come, not as strange and unwelcome intrusions into the soul, but like a sudden light, or Divine assurance, entering a spirit already prepared to receive it.¹

In keeping with the dignity of their office, the prophets bore themselves as men moved by a higher than human impulse. They were the fearless champions of true religion, as embodied in the theocracy; struggling with a grand resoluteness for its interests wherever they seemed endangered. They claimed to counsel rulers, as the spokesmen for the King of kings, and to denounce the sins of all classes, as the representatives of eternal truth and righteousness. Samuel takes his place as by a divine right at the side of Saul, to advise and control in the name of the Highest. Nathan and Gad are the chosen monitors of David, and in later times the best and the worst kings alike find themselves commended or

¹ Even so free a critic as Nöldeke says: "The prophet feels himself touched immediately by God Himself, and speaks in His name; whence he often, indeed, speaks of God in the first person. The human personality at these moments wholly draws back, but only to reappear presently with full distinctness; for this characteristic is simply the expression of the highest inspiration, or of the deepest conviction of the oneness of the human thought and will with the Divine. He alone is a prophet who is animated by sincere morality and religion, and stands as a servant of the faith of Israel. He has, at most, a superficial analogy in merely external points with the diviner or the convulsionary.—*Die Alttestamentliche Literatur*, p. 200.

arraigned by these messengers of Jehovah. After the division of the kingdom, especially, a wider sphere opened for them; and the nearer the catastrophe of the ten tribes approached, the more vehemently did they raise their voice, denouncing, at one time, the ungodliness, the hypocrisy, the immorality of their contemporaries; at another, the evil, selfish rule, and false policy of kings and nobles; now warning men of the impending judgments of Jehovah; now painting the contrast between their own fallen and corrupt days, and the splendour of a Messianic future, when the theocracy would emerge, in unimagined glory, from its passing eclipse. Restlessly passing from town to town, as the occasion demanded, they appear in public places, in markets, at the city gates, in the streets, and in the courts of the Temple, bearing noble witness for God; fearlessly entering even the palaces of kings and nobles to deliver their message. They were at once the preachers of repentance to the nation, its counsellors, and its consolers; the interpreters of each forward step of God in the realization of His purposes; the exponents and enforcers of the Law in its highest sense; the reformers of a degenerate, political, and religious life; the censors of public authorities; and the guardians and protectors of all the higher interests of the community. Their office was thus a check on the despotism of kings, and the violence or injustice of the powerful; and at the same time, they were the tribunes of the people, defending their liberties, while fearlessly denouncing their faults.

Such noble fidelity could not, however, hope to escape the resentment of those whom it assailed, and hence the story of the prophets is one of persecution and martyrdom. Venerated at first, while the glow of revived national purity and religiousness lasted, they were ere

long hated when the spread of corruption made them the accusers of all classes in turn. Thus outlawed, as it were, they lived in constant danger of violence, and too often became its victims. Later generations, indeed, accused their forefathers of having "killed the prophets," and spoke of their lives as subject to every indignity and wrong. They had trials of cruel mockings and scourging, says the Epistle to the Hebrews; suffered bonds and imprisonment; were stoned, or sawn asunder; or burnt,¹ or slain with the sword; or wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.²

The modes in which the prophets delivered their messages, though strange to our Western ideas, were in strict keeping with the spirit and manners of the East. Though simple and artless, as became those of men suddenly acted on by the Spirit of God, their utterances were marked by the rhythmic measure natural to Orientals, often passing into lofty verse, as when Isaiah tells his hearers that he will sing them a song touching the vineyard of his well beloved.³ Poetry, indeed, was their usual vehicle. It appears first in the songs of Miriam and Moses, and bursts into its noon of splendour in the muse of David, who was followed by most of the prophets; their writings which have come down to us, being, with rare exceptions of occasional episodes, couched in poetical forms. They spoke or sang, in many cases, as we have seen, to the music of instruments, as when Elisha prophesied to the music of a minstrel's harp; or when the company of prophets which met Saul "came down from the 'high place' or hill altar, with a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp before them."⁴ Physical

¹ So *Tischendorf*.

² Heb. xi. 36, 37.

³ Isa. v. 1.

⁴ 1 Sam. x. 5.

excitement, strange to us, but familiar in the East, accompanied their "prophesyings," and to this they added, not infrequently, symbolical actions,¹ and even symbolical dress,² to impress their messages more deeply on their audience. Such modes of teaching were, in fact, only acted parables, as when Samuel and Ahijah rent their cloaks, or when Jeremiah concealed his girdle, or Hananiah broke the yokes. But, like our Lord, they at times used the spoken parable as well, as in the Ewe Lamb, by Nathan, or the Vine, by Isaiah. Their ordinary dress was a rough hairy mantle, as in the case of Elijah and John the Baptist,³ and this was so characteristic of the order,⁴ that the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to them as wearing sheep skins and goat skins.⁵ Indeed, in the Greek Bible, the mantle of Elijah is expressly said to have been of the former. A common girdle of leather, like that now worn by Eastern peasants, bound this round their persons: their costume forming in its coarse simplicity a contrast to the soft raiment of the rich, noticed by Christ Himself, in reference to His great precursor.⁶ Such humble clothing was in keeping with the stern earnestness of lives, which were a protest against worldliness in even its more innocent aspects, and won the respect of men by their evident sincerity. The Baptist took no part in the pleasures of the table,⁷ and Jeremiah tells us he withdrew from all festivities, and ate alone.⁸ They often betook themselves to hills and mountains, or lonely places,⁹ as if they liked to

¹ 1 Kings xi. 29. Jer. xix. 1; xxviii. 35; xliii. 9. Ezek. iv. 12, 13; xxxvii. 15.

² Zech. xiii. 4.

³ Isai. xx. 2.

⁴ 1 Kings xix. 13, 19. Matt. iii. 4.

⁵ Heb. xi. 37.

⁶ Matt. xi. 8.

⁷ Matt. xi. 18. Luke vii. 33.

⁸ Jer. xv. 17.

⁹ 1 Kings xix. 8. 2 Kings i. 9; ii. 17; iv. 25; vi. 17. Heb. xi. 38.

retire from the noise of the city and seek quiet, where their souls could better commune with God. But they were no monkish ascetics, or idle mendicants; though poor, as a rule, they maintained their wives and households by honest labour or private means, and were constantly seen in the haunts of men, carrying out their great work as opportunity allowed. Long hair and abstinence from wine, that is, the Nazarite vow, are said, by Josephus, to have marked them in the time of Samuel.¹

Their chief mission, as we have seen, was to keep the nation true to its allegiance to God as the Head of the theocracy, and hence to oppose all idolatry, immorality, and merely formal religion. Spoken with such aims, their discourses breathe a spirituality and depth peculiarly their own. Entirely distinct from priests, they nevertheless, when necessary, performed what were strictly speaking priestly duties, such as sacrifice and intercession.² But in later times, especially after the building of the Temple, the official observance of all theocratic forms became the exclusive right of the priesthood, while the representation of the theocracy in its spirit and essence fell to the prophets. Hence they naturally exalted moral above ceremonial duties, earnestly protesting against the separation of religion from morality, to which men in all

¹ *Ant.*, V. x. 3.

² Samuel often sacrificed; 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9; ix. 13, etc.; appointed fasts, poured out libations (1 Sam. vii. 5, 6), appointed Levites as door-keepers of the sanctuary (1 Chron. ix. 22; xxvi. 28), and so forth. The prophets, Gad and Nathan, made the arrangements respecting the music at the Tabernacle (2 Chron. xxix. 25; 2 Sam. xxiv. 18), and in the kingdom of Israel Elijah restored the altar on Carmel, and sacrificed on it (1 Kings xviii. 21). The priests had, in fact, left the northern kingdom for Judah, and the prophets alone remained to carry out the priestly duties of the worship of Jehovah.

ages are inclined. The ritualism of the Mosaic system tended constantly to supersede the inner religious life, and to check this the prophets spared no efforts. "To obey," says Samuel, "is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "Thou desirest not sacrifice," says David; "else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. Sacrifice and burnt offering Thou didst not desire. Then said I, Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God." "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," says Hosea. "I hate, I despise your feast days," says Amos, "and I will not dwell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer Me burnt offerings, and meat offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." "Your new moons, and your appointed feasts," says Isaiah, "my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. Wash you, make you clean cease to do evil; learn to do well. Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free?"¹ The teaching of all the prophets is in this strain. Sacrifices, fastings, and ablutions are valueless, compared with a worthy life. To fear God and walk humbly before Him; to do justly, to love mercy; to show uprightness and truth, are of more value with Jehovah than mere ceremonies or rites, even when prescribed by Himself.

But not only were the prophets the great preachers of Israel; we owe chiefly to them the inspired writings. They were the historians, and sacred poets, no less than

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 22. Ps. li. 16, 17; xl. 6-8. Hosea vi. 6. Amos v. 21-24. Isaiah i. 14-17; lviii. 6.

the teachers of their age. We read of the Acts of David, by Samuel, Gad, and Nathan; of Solomon and Jeroboam, by Nathan and Iddo; of Rehoboam, by Iddo and Shemaiah. Samuel wrote a book on the duties of a Jewish king; Iddo, a history of king Abiah; Jehu, another of Jehoshaphat; and Isaiah, of Uzziah.¹ It may be that our present historical books were drawn from these sources among others, but had these documents come down to us, how priceless their value! In the earlier ages prophecies were apparently only spoken; though, doubtless, often afterwards written down by "sons" or disciples, as those of Jeremiah by Baruch. In later times, however, they seem to have been sometimes written before delivery, as in those of Ezekiel, and some parts of Isaiah.²

Such an institution, apart from its priceless services to revelation, must have been of immense value in a nation exposed to Oriental despotism. The ancient popular liberties found in it their natural defenders; it was the great help to progress, and the triumphant opponent of many a wrong. The only approach in modern times to anything analogous, seems to be found in a few of the best of the dervishes of Mahommedanism, as they appear among the simpler races of Central Asia. "Without them," says Dr. Wolff, "no man would be safe. They are the chief people in the East, and keep in the recollection of

¹ 1 Sam. x. 25. 1 Chron. xxix. 29. 2 Chron. ix. 29. 1 Kings xi. 41. 2 Chron. xii. 15; xiii. 22; xx. 34; xxvi. 22.

² Isaiah viii. 1. Authorities for the preceding notice of the prophets. Knobel, *Prophetismus der Hebräer*. Winer, *Realwörterb.* Hengstenberg, in Kitto's *Cyclo.* Dillmann, in *Schenkel. Bib. Lex.* Propheten, in *Riehm.* Prophets, etc., in *Dict. of the Bible*. Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. i. Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. i. Naegelsbach, in *Herzog.* Ewald, *Die Propheten*. Bunsen, *Bibel Urkunden* vol. i., etc., etc.

Oriental despots, that there are ties between heaven and earth. They restrain the tyrant in his oppression of his subjects; they are consulted by courts and by counsellors of state in times of emergency, and are, in fact, the great benefactors of the human race in the East." "The name," he adds, "comes from *daer*, door, and *wesh*, hanging, and means one who hangs at the gate of God, is inspired by Him, and trusts His bounty.¹ They strip and go naked like Isaiah; they sit at the gate; are consulted by kings; sit wrapped in their mantles in deep meditation, and, like Elijah, will answer: 'I am filled with zeal for God,' or 'I think of the time when the Restorer of all things will come, and the wolf and the lamb will lie down together.' They have each a disciple, as Elijah had Elisha, and have symbolical names expressing their relations to God. That of one, a friend of Wolff's, was given him because his mother said on the day of his birth, 'Thou shalt be a slave of the most merciful God.' A dervish signs himself, when he makes peace between kings, 'the king of Righteousness,' his spiritual title; exactly corresponding to 'Melchizedek.' That personage produced wine and bread to Abraham, and thou, dear dervish, in the desert of Merv, broughtest out wine and sherbet to the weary wanderer, Joseph Wolff, and when he asked thee, who were thy father and mother? thou repliedst humbly, 'I am without father or mother, for I have forsaken all, for God's sake.'"²

At the head of an order thus concentrated on the

¹ Dr. Wolff even says: "The prophets were dervishes in dress, style, and action," and he draws a curious parallel between a dervish and John the Baptist. He adds the curious idea that Jacob's thigh was disjointed by his ecstasy in prayer, and says that he has seen this once and again in dervishes.

² *Wolff's Travels*, vol. i. pp. 483-5.

things of God and superior to any worldly interests or distractions, Samuel's great work of reformation in Israel must have been greatly facilitated. Like the preaching friars, in England, in the opening of the thirteenth century, in their first purity and self-denying enthusiasm, they brought religion into the fair and the market-place, and woke a zeal for it in the hearts of the nation, long sunk in ignorance or perverted to heathenism.

Another circumstance aided in raising the people. The great tribe of Judah had taken no share in the affairs of the nation at large during the whole period of the Judges. Isolated on the wide upland pastures of its territory, it was practically non-existent so far as the other tribes were concerned. It is not even mentioned in the triumphal ode of Deborah. It lived apart from its brethren, with no share either in their sorrow or joys, their struggles or victories. Settled among Kenites, Idumæans, and Jebusites, the men of Judah may have had their own wars, but, if so, no notice of them remains. Simeon, its vassal tribe, shared its seclusion and fortunes. It was cut off from the rest of Israel by the Jebusites, who lived between the mountains of Ephraim and those of Judah. Renewed attacks of the Philistines on the central region, in which the southern districts were overwhelmed, appear first to have roused Judah and Simeon from their supineness. To free themselves from this terrible foe who had enslaved them, they seem to have sought an alliance with their brethren. Peace had been made between these and the Amorites,¹ perhaps from common dread of the Philistines: Samuel had risen into universal notice as the leader of the nation, and union with it would strengthen the interests of all, especially since Judah had gradually

¹ Sam. vii. 14.

pressed farther north, and now occupied Bethlehem, close to Jebus; its former settlements reaching only to Hebron.¹

Hence, in Samuel's day, Judah and Simeon acted with the other tribes, and this alliance brought a new and potent element into the struggle for liberty. Judah had few towns in its territory and had thus escaped the enervation of town life. Its only place of importance was Hebron; the other settlements were merely villages. The corruption introduced in other parts from intercourse with the Phenicians was thus unknown in the south. Baal and Astarte, with their impurities had not found a footing there; the population remaining in great measure, what they had been since the conquest, simple shepherds, cherishing their freedom and defending it as they best could, but careless of warlike glory and without ambition. The manners of the patriarchal time had, in fact, lingered in Judah when lost elsewhere.²

And as with the manners so with religion. The families of the tribe seem to have had, each, its own place of offering.³ Hebron, at least, boasted such a sanctuary. But the ritual had remained simple, and the God of Israel was the recognised object of worship. Beersheba, on the south, appears to have been a religious centre for Judah and also for Simeon;⁴ perhaps from its having been hallowed by the altars of Abraham and Isaac.⁵ Indeed, it retained its character as such after the Temple had been built, pilgrimages being even then made to it.⁶ Heathen ideas may in some measure have mingled with the local worship and manners, for idolatrous races not only surrounded the district, but lived in

¹ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 155.

² *Ibid.*

³ 1 Sam. xx. 6.

⁴ Josh. xv. 28; xix. 2.

⁵ Gen. xxi. 33; xxvi. 23-25.

⁶ Amos v. 5.

it and were connected with the Hebrew population by intermarriages, though its simplicity saved it from the worst heathen corruptions. Hence reunion with the nation at large was of great moment.

Yet without the commanding influence and personality of Samuel no political strengthening or religious revival would have availed to deliver and regenerate Israel. But he had all the qualities needed. More a man of strong will and action than of meditation, he had seen from the first that his work lay in raising and ennobling the moral and religious feelings of his race; and the patient labours of twenty years slowly justified his course by a wide revival of national obedience to the Law, as that of God, the theocratic King. Everything opposed to it was fiercely proscribed. Irregular worship, like that of Micah or of Dan, was no longer permitted. A Nazarite from his birth, and surrounded by others who had taken the same vow, Samuel demanded from the nation the devotion to the ancient faith he himself showed. Filled with intense zeal, his enthusiasm gradually fired that of the multitude. Nor was the absence of the Ark at Kirjath-jearim, where it rested in a private house, and was virtually withdrawn from the nation, without a strong influence in reviving religious feeling. All Israel came ultimately "to lament after Jehovah," thus as it were, no longer in their midst. Yet, with all helps of subordinate co-workers and circumstances, the triumph must have been very gradual. In the first years there could hardly have been a hope of the amazing revolution ultimately effected. But the spiritual leaven was meanwhile steadily spreading, and long before Samuel's death the nation had once more rallied to its ancient faith with an earnestness which influenced the whole future of the race.

The signs of a great religious revolution having become

evident, Samuel could at last announce to the tribes, that if they returned to Jehovah with all their hearts, putting away the foreign idols from among them, and preparing their hearts for Jehovah and serving Him only, He would deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines. Nor was the counsel unheeded. Far and near, through the land, the numerous images of Baal and Ashtaroth, with their foul groves and licentious symbols, were swept away, and the nation was ready to proclaim that, henceforth, it would serve Jehovah alone.

It only remained to inaugurate this reformation by a public solemnity, and for this purpose Samuel, acting as Head of the tribes, convened a great assembly of all Israel at Mizpeh, or "Nob"—the Watch-tower, now Nebi Samwil, the tomb of the prophet Samuel¹—a hill about five miles north of Jerusalem, 2,935 feet above the sea,² and already the politico-religious centre of the nation in these distracted times. The Tabernacle, saved from the burning of Shiloh, had apparently been re-erected on this spot, though it did not boast of the Ark. The assembly that declared war against Benjamin had met on the same spot,³ which was also, ere long, to witness the election of Saul as king.⁴ Nor could any place have been better for the purpose. The highest summit in the district, it commands a view as far as the Mediterranean on the west, and the mountains of Moab on the east, while the range of landscape is equally grand to the north and south. If Israel met him there, Samuel would, he told them, intercede with Jehovah for them, if, haply, He would once more turn His face toward

¹ *Kneucker* in *Schenkel's Bib. Lex. Graetz*, vol. i. p. 156. *Mizpe*, in *Riehm*.

² It is, however, only 500 feet above the valley at its foot.

³ *Jud.* xx.

⁴ *1 Sam.* x. 17.

them. Vast multitudes obeyed the summons, and at once joined in a solemn public humiliation before God. Pouring out water "before the Lord," in confirmation of the vow they were about to make, which was thus declared as irrevocable as the act of spilling the water on the ground,¹ they fasted, as on the great Day of Atonement, and sadly owned, doubtless with loud weeping, that they had sinned against Jehovah. On this, Samuel, thankful to plead for them, now that they were returning to their God, "cried" to Him on their behalf, accompanying his intercession with sacrifice. That the repentance was sincere was proved by the future; for, notwithstanding temporary declensions, the nation henceforth never fell away from God to the same extent as in the past. From the gathering at Mizpeh may be dated its fidelity to its ancient faith. Samuel had quickened into new life the almost abandoned work of Moses.

The transactions at Mizpeh continued long enough to alarm the Philistines by such a sign of revived national life, and to give them time to send forward an army to disperse the gathering. The smoke of the sacrifice offered by Samuel was still ascending when the approaching enemy was seen from the high look-out of the hill. The Hebrews had brought with them what arms they had, and, strong in the enthusiasm of the time, charged down with a fury which spread panic through the Philistine ranks. A terrible thunderstorm, moreover, breaking out at the moment, seemed the voice of God fighting on their side.² Routed and fleeing for the first time before

¹ Bush. *Illust. of Script.*, p. 158. Roberts' *Orient. Illust.* It is of immemorial antiquity, in this significance, in the East.

² Thunder and rain at the time of the year when the assembly at Mizpeh was held, are very rare. It was wheat harvest (1 Sam. xii. 17), that is, the end of May or the beginning of June,

Israel, the invaders found no pity, the pursuit continuing to the very edge of their own district. A long peace was the result of this great victory, which Samuel commemorated by a memorial stone, raised in acknowledgment of the help he had received from Jehovah. The restoration of a number of Hebrew towns on the border of the Maritime Plain followed. But the southern tribes



MEMORIAL STONES.

seem still to have been left in the hands of the Philistines, if we may judge by their helpless slavery in the early days of Saul.

when the latter rains have ended. In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene. Robinson's *Bib. Res.*, vol. i. p. 430. "Rain in harvest" was a figure for what was unlooked for and out of place (Prov. xxvi. 1).

In reality the Head of the nation long before the gathering at Mizpeh, Samuel was there formally appointed its Judge, and thus combined in himself both civil and religious authority.





CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST HEBREW KING.

LITTLE is known of the history of Samuel in the years immediately succeeding the victory of Ebenezer; which, it is evident, greatly dispirited the Philistines, and secured the peace of central Palestine during the prophet's lifetime, though the southern tribes remained under the yoke of the uncircumcised. Meanwhile, his bands of evangelists continued their labours unweariedly. He himself, also, made circuits year by year from his home in Ramah, his native town, to the ancient sanctuaries of Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh, Shiloh being no longer the national centre; and "judged"—or as Graetz renders it, "taught"¹—Israel at these places. Their nearness to each other shows, however, that little of the country was under his control, or as yet acted together, for Gilgal is only about fourteen miles east of Mizpeh, and Bethel lies midway between them, about seven miles to the north. As in former years, he probably summoned to him, on these journeys, the elders of the people, laid before them their duties, reminded them of the miseries of the past when they had forsaken Jehovah and turned to idols, and warned them against any relapse. He would also hear and decide questions between man and man, and he

¹ *Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 158.

further acted as priest; sacrificing on the altars which had been built at Ramah and the other towns of his "circuit."

But a new feature in the worship of Israel now added its influence, to aid the plans of the great prophet. With the help of the "sons" of the prophets,¹ he introduced psalms, choruses, and musical accompaniments, which tended powerfully to stimulate religious feeling. The psalm of praise thus became a prominent part of the worship of God, Samuel himself, the forefather of the race of Korah, famous in later days as composers of psalms, and of music for them, probably leading the first choirs. His race indeed was musical, for his grandson Heman, with Asaph and Jeduthun, were the great religious poets and musicians of the next generation. Long before the rise of Grecian poetry or music, the hills and valleys of Palestine echoed with lofty hymns, sung to the notes of many instruments. Mere ritualism did not satisfy the reformer; everything was adopted that tended to give religion its seat in the affections and life.

Meanwhile, the destruction of Shiloh had caused a great change in the public worship of the nation. Ahitub, a grandson of Eli, the elder brother of the child born at the news of the taking of the Ark, had fled with the rescued Tabernacle to Nob, taking with him the high-priestly robes and the ephod, with the Urim and Thummim.² There, he seems, also, to have made an unauthorized copy of the Ark,³ of course without its most precious distinction; the stone tables of the commandments given at Sinai. Henceforth, for many years, this spot became to some extent the religious centre of the land.

¹ Graetz calls them "Levites."

² 1 Sam. xxii. 19.

³ 1 Sam. xxi. 2-8.

In the later years of Samuel's life, his sphere of action had extended so far to the south that his sons were appointed by him, in his growing feebleness, to act in his stead as "Judges," at Beersheba, on the edge of the desert,¹ but we hear nothing of the northern tribes, or of those beyond Jordan.

It is difficult to realize the greatness of a historic figure after three thousand years, but Samuel must have been more than the Luther of his day. Uniting in himself all the highest offices of his nation—its supreme prophet, its virtual high priest, and its acknowledged ruler—his influence was intensified by the lofty singleness of his life and aim. Men could not forget as his age increased, how Jehovah had chosen to make revelations through him while he was yet a child; how he had grown up in the sacred shadow of the Tabernacle; how he had been a Nazarite from his birth; how fearless and loyal had been his enthusiasm for Jehovah; how incorruptible he had been as a Judge; and how well his life had illustrated the high morality and godliness he had enforced. They had seen the religious revolution he had accomplished. The state as a whole, in its great characteristics, owed, in fact, its noble future to his work, for he had in effect founded the order of prophets; he had prepared the way for the kings; and his revival of the Mosaic religion brought with it the future temple and its priesthood. Before his time Israel had had no real national existence, and seemed likely to perish entirely; yet he left it proud of its dignity as the People of God, and on the threshold of its highest glory under David.

But the life thus rekindled was soon found to demand new political institutions. The new wine must be put

¹ 1 Sam. vii. 16, 17; viii. 2.

into new bottles. All the evils of the past seemed likely to return at Samuel's death, for his sons had proved themselves venal in their office as Judges, and had forfeited public confidence and respect. The peace that had prevailed since the battle of Ebenezer had served to strengthen the Reformation, but it had also quickened the desire for national union, and this was endangered under the old forms of the theocracy, which provided no permanent central authority. Judah and Benjamin were still under the Philistines, and a stronger and better defined government than that of a Judge was needed, to gather all the force of Israel for their deliverance. Most of the neighbouring peoples had kings, for even the five Seranim of the Philistine towns were lords of their respective districts, acting together in their relentless hostility to the Hebrews, and they had latterly chosen the ruler of Gath as head of the whole Philistine country.¹ The wish for a king, which had shown itself nearly two hundred years before in connection with Gideon, had been slowly growing since then and was now well nigh universal, but Samuel's position and the profound respect in which he was held made it difficult to carry out. No one thought of displacing him, and no one but he could secure for a king the necessary authority and a hearty acceptance. Another great assembly of the elders of the tribes was therefore held, doubtless after much consultation over the country at large, and Samuel was waited on by them at his home at Ramah, with the earnest request that, as his sons had not proved like himself, he would appoint a king over Israel such as ruled the nations around.

Such a demand must have been intensely unwelcome to the aged prophet. He had devoted his life to the

¹ 1 Sam. xxvii. 2.

restoration of the theocracy as it had been instituted under Moses, and the change to a monarchy seemed irreconcilable with it. It appeared, indeed, a rejection of Jehovah, whom alone he recognised as their king. The whole nation, he feared, would be exposed to the craft and the caprice of a single man. The equality of all before God and the law, and the independence of each family, under its patriarchal head, would be destroyed. The kings around were lawless despots, and Israel would find royalty equally fatal. The king would take the choicest young men for his chariots and horses, or for runners before him. He would levy forced labour to cultivate the crown lands, to make arms for war, and chariots. Even the young women would be taken to make spices and perfumes, to cook, and to bake. Far and near he would wrest to himself what lands he chose, and give them to his courtiers. He would take a tenth of all produce as a tax to support his favourites. He would carry off for his service or use the male and female servants, the goodliest cattle and the asses, and he would take the sheep. In fact, the nation would become his slaves.¹

But the greatness of Samuel's character is shown in nothing more strikingly than that, after finding the change had the sanction of God, he not only waived further opposition, but led the new movement, with calm wisdom, to a successful issue. He could no longer hope to be so great a personage as in the past, but that did not concern him. Notwithstanding his antecedents and deep rooted convictions, if a king were inevitable he would frankly seek the right man, surrounding him at the same time with such checks against his playing the despot, or invading the supreme rights of Jehovah,

¹ 1 Sam. vii. 11-18.

as should secure alike the welfare of the people and the stability of the national faith. He would not yield, however, without attempting to dissuade the people he loved so well from a course which he believed so dangerous. Pointing out to an assembly at Ramah the evils that would follow the change to a monarchy, he urged them earnestly to continue as they were. But the time had come for such a development of the ancient institutions, and not even his honoured voice could avail to alter the wish of the nation.

Such a ruler would necessarily stand in a unique position. As only the viceroy and representative of the true invisible King, Jehovah, he must be pointed out beforehand by special indications, and consecrated as to sacred office. That he should, moreover, have commended himself to the nation by his qualities and deeds, was essential. Nor could it be permitted him to reign like other Eastern kings, by his mere pleasure; for the rights of Jehovah and those of His people, as a nation of freemen, demanded equal respect. He must therefore, at all times, remember that he ruled under a higher King, whose will, expressed in His revealed law, was his absolute guide both in religion and ordinary life; its transgression, in any particular, being self-destruction. But such a man would necessarily be in loving sympathy with Him under whom he held his authority, to be a king after His heart; a man truly religious; obeying, not by mere outward constraint, but from loving choice. To find such an one would at all times be difficult, and too often impossible. All that could be done, therefore, was to make the best selection that offered, and remove him from his high dignity if he failed to answer the conditions of retaining it.

The all-important choice fell upon Saul, a member

of the tribe of Benjamin—the smallest of the tribes of Israel; perhaps in the thought that there would be less danger of a Benjamite overriding the limits of his just power by any local influence, or of the tribe itself obtaining an undue preponderance.¹ The personage selected, moreover, showed no signs of ambition or self assertion. His clan—that of Matri—was one of the smallest in Benjamin, but his father, Kish, was known as a valiant man,² powerful and wealthy,³ from his lands and herds—one from whose family, in times when as yet there was no hereditary circle of royal birth, the future ruler could well be chosen. He had a nephew, Abner, who might have been selected, but he was ambitious and self seeking, and perhaps less disposed to respect the rights of the people. In the son of Kish, however, the various qualities demanded appeared to centre. Of gigantic stature, in the prime of life, and noble alike in features and bearing, he realized the ideal of a king of men as conceived in antiquity.⁴ Men thought fondly of him, after his death, as the roe or gazelle⁵ of Israel, the emblem of swiftness and grace, of beauty and gentleness. He was now about forty years old, with a grown up son, and modestly busied himself in his father's fields or in

¹ *Winer*.² 1 Sam. ix. 1.³ 1 Sam. ix. 1. Power = substance.⁴ Euripides speaks of a "form worthy of a king." Ajax, in Homer,

"Towers over all with head and shoulders broad."

Il., iii. 227.

And Turnus, in Virgil,

"Out-tops the foremost chieftains by a head."

Æn., vii. 784.Xerxes was noted as worthy by his stature and comeliness to be the leader of his vast hosts. Herod., *Thalia*, 20.⁵ 2 Sam. i. 19. Beauty = roe or gazelle.

tending his herds, with no thoughts, apparently, beyond his own valley or hamlet. His father's house was still his home and he remained under paternal authority; for the patriarchal custom still survived by which the son attained self-control only after his father's death. Such a man seemed little likely to be self-willed, or to hesitate in accepting the guidance of a prophet like Samuel, when raised to the highest post.

The circumstances of his selection were in keeping with the simplicity of the age. A drove of his father's asses having strayed, Saul, accompanied by a slave, was sent to find and bring them back.¹ Three days passed, however, without their tracking them, and he was on the point of returning empty handed, when his attendant urged him to try if the great prophet Samuel could not help him. Even on such trivial details men were then wont to "enquire of God."² The indispensable prerequisite of a "gift" to the seer stood, however, in the way. A cake of bread would have been enough; for in this case no more was expected than a mere form demanded by Eastern courtesy.³ But the future king had not even so much left. The fourth part of a shekel of silver,⁴ which his slave had with him, served, however,

¹ This slave's name is given by Jewish tradition as Doeg the Edomite, or Syrian. (*Sept.*) In open, pastoral countries, droves of horses, asses, or cattle, are turned loose while not needed by their owner. Each drove keeps together and is readily known by a mark branded on the different animals. *Rosenmüller*, vol. iii. p. 81.

² 1 Sam. ix. 9.

³ So universal is the custom of giving and receiving gifts in the East, that there are fifteen words for them in Hebrew. It would have been as contrary to good manners to have come empty handed as for us to enter a parlour with our hats on.

⁴ Conder gives the value of the shekel as 3s. 4d., but money was

instead, and with this in their hand they climbed the steep hill road to the prophet's "city." It was towards evening, when the maidens were coming out to draw water from the town well, and from them they heard that Samuel was to offer the periodical public sacrifices at the public "high place" that day—probably the day of the New Moon—and to preside at the usual feast on the remains of the victims, in a circle of invited guests.

Meanwhile the prophet was equally eager to meet Saul, for a Divine intimation had been given him that the Benjamite who should that day seek him was to be the king of Israel. An invitation to the feast, therefore, naturally followed; lower cares were dismissed by an announcement that the asses were found, and the modest wonder of Saul raised by the seer telling him that he was "the desire of Israel."¹ That he, a Benjamite, and of the most insignificant clan of the smallest tribe, should have such honour, seemed incredible. He was treated, however, with the greatest respect at the feast, the choicest part being put first before him, that he might tear off a portion.² He was afterwards taken home by Samuel for the night.³ Next morning, "about then worth many times more than at present. Thus, five denarii, say 3s., was the amount allowed under the early Emperors in Rome, more than 1000 years after Samuel's day, as the wheat money for a man, for a month. *Friedländer*.

¹ Samuel says he will tell Saul all that is in his heart (1 Sam. ix. 19). Does this hint at his having already brooded over the oppression of his country, and thinking how he might free it?

² 1 Sam. ix. 22. Parlour = (*Sept.*) caravanserai. Ver. 24, Shoulder = thigh.

³ The Septuagint in ver. 25, last clause, reads: "He spread a couch for Saul upon the top of the house." In the hot season the roof is the pleasantest place for sleeping. Slight shelters are made on it to protect the sleeper from the dew. *Bush., Illustrations.*

the spring of day," both were astir, for early habits prevail in the East, and outside the "city," the servant having been sent on before, Saul received the sacred kingly anointing, and was dismissed to his home, with various intimations, the fulfilment of which would confirm his being divinely chosen for the high office.¹ Two men "by Rachel's sepulchre," informed him that the asses were found. At the terebinth of Tabor, three others, "going up to God to Bethel," gave him, as if in homage, two loaves out of three which, with three kids and a skin of wine, they were carrying thither as an offering. Finally, at Gibeah, where the tax collector of the Philistines was stationed, a band of prophets, singing to the music of instruments, met him as they came down the hill from the high place, where they had been worshipping or sacrificing. Excited by all that had happened, a crowd of emotions to which he had hitherto been a stranger agitated his mind, rousing thoughts of which he had hitherto never dreamed. The religious fervour of the prophets was irresistible. The Spirit of God came upon Saul, and he also prophesied. That one silent and reserved till now should kindle into such enthusiasm might well seem strange to those around, ignorant as they were of what had gone before. It was, however, the crisis of his spiritual life. Religious feeling had hitherto only slumbered in his bosom. From this time it became the ruling power, though his after life showed that, however intense, it was superficial, and left his deeper nature essentially unchanged. He had been "turned into another man."² No longer the mere

¹ The word translated "captain" (1 Sam. x. 1), *nāḡeed*, is not the usual word for a king; it is rather a military head. Samuel shrinks here, as elsewhere, from the use of the word "king," which he so much disliked.

² 1 Sam. x. 6.

villager, he felt himself called to lead the nation. His soul woke into new manhood now that he was entrusted with a commission to deliver his people. But as yet he said nothing, even in his family circle. He was waiting for an outward call,—the counterpart of that which he had received within.

The ancient liberties of the nation meanwhile demanded a public sanction of that which had been done in private by Samuel, though it was certain that this would at once be enthusiastically accorded. A great national assembly was therefore summoned to the usual centre at Mizpeh, that the prophet might present “the chosen of God” before the freemen of Israel, for acceptance as their head. But the honour was as yet too great for the shy nature of Saul, and he was nowhere to be seen, till at last found hiding among the circle of wagons and baggage drawn up outside. Once beheld, however, his magnificent presence won instant allegiance, except from a few, in all probability of the ambitious tribe of Ephraim—and the air was rent for the first time in Israel by the loud cry, “God save the king.” But Samuel, true, as became a prophet, at once to ancient popular rights and to the claims of Jehovah, the invisible King, would not allow an unconditional election. Expounding the principles of the constitution in an earnest address, he strictly limited and defined the royal power, afterwards writing down his words in a book duly laid up “before Jehovah,” as the supreme authority to which all future kings should have to bow.¹ What a treasure, if it were still extant!

It was a turning-point in the history of Israel, and the almost unbroken unanimity of the multitude augured well for the future. The gifts demanded from all on such an

¹ It is called “the book.” 1 Sam x. 25.

occasion, as an act of homage, were eagerly proffered, only a few holding back; but of these, on such an occasion, Saul took no notice. Setting off, escorted by the fighting men of the host, to his home at Gibeah, a hill town four miles north of the present Jerusalem, and two miles south of Samuel's village of Ramah,¹ he dismissed them for the time on reaching it, and modestly entered again on the peaceful toils of his former life, till the moment arrived for action.

The position of Israel seemed so desperate that only a leader roused to the highest enthusiasm would have dared to undertake its cause. Disarming of the people had long been complete.² It was a repetition of the time of Deborah, when neither shield nor spear could be seen in 40,000 in Israel.³ The very sickles,⁴ coulters, axes, and goads,⁵ could be sharpened only in the Philistine towns at the foot of the hills. Saul and Jonathan alone had swords.⁶ Tribute officers of the conquerors oppressed the people, and their garrisons checked any hope of resistance. So entirely subdued, indeed, was Benjamin, that part of the tribe served in the Philistine ranks against their brethren. Only the favour of Providence could bring deliverance; but this was before long vouchsafed through Saul, and his illustrious son Jonathan.

That hero, one of the most attractive in the Old Testament, was now in the bloom of his early manhood, and already famous for his strength, swiftness of foot, and manly agility.⁷ His skill with the bow was proverbial,

¹ *Dict of the Bible*, Gibeah.

² See page 5.

³ Jud., v. 8.

⁴ *Sept.*

⁵ *Peshito*. Thenius adopts from the Septuagint the addition,

"And the edges of the shares and of the coulters were sharpened at three shekels for each piece of iron, and the same for the axes, and for the sickles, and for setting the goads."

⁶ 1 Sam. xiii. 22.

⁷ 2 Sam. i. 23.

and he doubtless excelled also in the other martial exercises of his "kinsmen," "the use of the right hand and the left in hurling stones and in shooting arrows."¹ His father and he were inseparably attached, the two always appearing in the narrative together. Inexpressibly dear to Saul, he dared not ask leave when about to imperil himself.² There was "nothing, great or small," which Saul did not tell him.³ In after years he yielded to his son's voice even in the paroxysms of frenzy which often overpowered him,⁴ and at last "in death they were not divided."⁵ It seems, indeed, as if the son would have been fitter for king than his father. Brave to excess, he had a winning affection and mildness, and a heart proverbial for the fidelity of its attachments. His only failing, indeed, as the heir to the kingdom, seems to have been the womanly gentleness of his nature, ever too ready to yield, and shrinking from the harsher parts of kingly duty at such a time.⁶ He was the popular idol.

Abner, Saul's cousin, was another hero in the impending war of liberation; a man valiant in battle and true to his master, even after the fall of the royal house. Other members also of the family and tribe, proud of the honour done them by Saul's election, eagerly rallied round him, and formed the nucleus of an army.

It is difficult to understand the order of events in the opening of the reign. A rapid expedition against the Ammonites comes first in the narrative as it stands; but it is not easy to imagine how the vast numbers who took part in it could have gathered while such a condition of things existed as is described in the subsequent chapters.⁷

¹ 1 Chron. xii. 2.

² 1 Sam. xiv. 1.

³ 1 Sam. xx. 2.

⁴ 1 Sam. xix. 6.

⁵ 2 Sam. i. 23. 1 Sam. xxiii. 16.

⁶ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 172.

⁷ See 1 Sam. xi. compared with chap. xiii.

Details may, however, have been omitted which would have explained the apparent confusion, and it is therefore safer to follow the order given.¹

In the long interval of 150 years since the death of Jephthah, their dreaded enemy, the people of Ammon, more settled and civilized than the Israelite shepherd tribes east of the Jordan, had not only recovered themselves, but under Nahash—"the serpent"—their king, were rapidly conquering the Hebrew territory. Their doings, in fact, had first brought to a head the demand for a king over Israel,² to repel their possible invasion of central Palestine; but though that had not taken place, their violence to the Transjordanic tribes roused the kindling spirit of nationality through the land.

Among the richly wooded hills of Gilead, on the south side of the Wady Jabes, rose the town of Jabesh, afterwards the capital of the district. Thick forests of the "oaks of Bashan" still vary the landscape around; rich olive groves, patches of barley, and luxuriant pastures filling its open spaces.³ Jabesh was about fifteen miles south-west of Bethshean, on the other side of the Jordan. An old tie bound it to Benjamin, Saul's tribe, for four hundred of its young maidens had become the wives of the remnant who had escaped the terrible civil war in the days of the Judges.

One evening as Saul was "coming after the herd" out of the open field—for he still followed the humble duties of his earlier life—the loud wail, which in the East announces some great calamity, suddenly rose. Runners had hurried from Jabesh Gilead to Gibeah—"Saul's

¹ Graetz puts the expedition to Ammon after the defeat of the Philistines.

² 1 Sam. xii. 12. *Winer*, vol. ii. p. 390.

³ Tristram, *Land of Israel*, pp. 556, 570.

hill"—with news that Nahash had laid siege to their town, and had threatened, if help did not come to them in seven days, to thrust out all their right eyes, as a mark of contempt for Israel.¹ Such tidings might well rouse a less excitable population. They proved the spark that kindled the dormant spirit of Saul. Of an unselfish nature, which never thought of excusing itself from a patriotic enterprise, his whole soul was moved, or as the sacred narrative expresses it, "the Spirit of God came on him," as on the ancient Judges, "mightily."² In



PORTION OF AN EGYPTIAN REPRESENTATION OF THE SIEGE OF A TOWN WITH TWO ENCIRCLING WALLS.

a moment his self distrust and shyness had vanished; the leader of men shone out in him from that hour. Repeating in a less terrible form the summons to war against his own tribe sent through the land by the injured Levite long before,³ he forthwith slew two of the cattle he was driving home, and having divided them

¹ The loss of the right eye would also make them useless in war.

² Jud. xiv. 6; xv. 14. In Amos v. 6, the same word is used of the breaking out of fire.

³ Jud. xix. 29.

into twelve pieces, sent one to each of the tribes, commanding them to come out to the help of Jabesh Gilead, on peril of death if they refused. It was the Hebrew anticipation of the fiery cross which used to be sent far and near to gather to war the Highland clans of Scotland; its tip "scathed with fire" and "quenched in blood," as an emblem of the fire and sword awaiting all who neglected its summons.¹ Times had been, in the weak rule of the Judges, when even so terrible a threat might have failed to rouse the tribes. But it was now felt that things were not as they had been in the past. The day was gone when every one could do what was right in his own eyes. The election of a king had raised over the nation a strong will, which it must obey. A vast multitude, therefore, streamed forth-with from all parts to the rendezvous. Passing at once over the Jordan, they assailed from three sides the Ammonites beleaguering Jabesh Gilead, driving them off in wild panic. To have delivered the town was not, however, the only result. Safety from any inroad of Nahash was henceforth secured for the lands west of the river.

¹ *Lady of the Lake*, canto. iii. stanzas 8-11. "When ■ Highland chief wished to summon his clan, he slew a goat, and making a cross of any light wood, seared its extremities at the fire and extinguished them in the blood of the animal. It was delivered to a swift and trusty messenger, who ran with it to the next hamlet, where he presented it to the principal person with a single word, implying the place of rendezvous. He who received the symbol was bound to send it forward with equal dispatch to the next village, and thus it passed with incredible celerity through all the district which owed allegiance to the chief. At sight of the fiery cross every man, from sixteen years old to sixty, capable of bearing arms, was obliged instantly to repair to the place of rendezvous. He who failed to appear suffered the extremities of fire and sword, emblematically denounced by the bloody and burnt marks upon the warlike signal."

Such a turn of the tide in Israel's fortunes naturally raised the spirits and hopes of all to the highest, as an earnest of a brighter future, and greatly strengthened the hands of Saul. The change to a monarchy seemed to be already vindicated; even Samuel lending it his support without further hesitation, and proposing that the election should be confirmed by a second great assembly held at Gilgal, on the Jordan, a spot safe from the Philistines. Once more, therefore, the people gathered to their open air parliament, if we may so speak; this time in far greater numbers than at Mizpeh.¹ Sacrifices were duly offered, and Saul again officially anointed as king by Samuel,² amidst a delirium of popular joy.

But the grand old prophet, though he had loyally carried out a revolution intensely distasteful to himself, would not let the opportunity pass without raising his voice once more to warn all of their duty and responsibility, and justify his own career, which seemed to be challenged by the substitution of a monarchy for his rule. He had walked before them from his childhood, said he, and was now old and grayheaded, but could call on every one present to witness before God and His Anointed, if he had taken any man's ox or ass, or defrauded or oppressed any one, or accepted in any case even so small a bribe as a pair of sandals³ to blind his eyes to justice? A loud shout of assent to this self vindication, rose at once, in reply, from the vast multitude. Reminding them, next, of the Divine goodness shown in the past, in their deliverance from Pharaoh, Sisera, the Philistines,

¹ The national Hebrew assembly consisted of all Israelites of twenty years old and upwards, who had not forfeited their privileges, together with foreigners admitted under certain conditions. Num. i. 3.

² 1 Sam. xi. 15. *Sept.*

³ *Sept.*

the king of Moab, the Midianites, and other enemies, by leaders raised by Providence in answer to their penitent cry for help from above, he frankly told them that their conduct in now demanding a king seemed to him, in the light of such a retrospect, at once ungrateful and unwise: ungrateful, since it appeared like a slight offered to Jehovah their ever living and glorious Lord; unwise, because it looked like trusting to a weak and mortal man rather than in their Almighty, eternal Head, who had so gloriously fought for them from of old. Yet, in His infinite condescension, He had sanctioned their demand, and had given them a king as they had asked, though He himself remained the great Suzerain, whom that king only represented.

If they and their ruler implicitly obeyed Jehovah, He would uphold them; if they rebelled, His hand would be against them. The unusual phenomenon of a thunderstorm in the hottest month of the year, that of the wheat harvest,¹ added solemnity to these weighty utterances, and filled all minds with terror, as their Divine corroboration. But Samuel quieted their fears, while renewing his warnings against forsaking God, and his assurances of blessing if they loyally followed Him. True to his character, above others, as a man of prayer,² "he would not cease to plead for them, and teach them the good and right way." He had once more set before them the true theory of the constitution, that they might not confound the new monarchy with that of neighbouring peoples. Henceforth the leadership of the nation was left in Saul's hands; subject, however, as befitted his position as a theocratic ruler, to the prophet's counsel, as the mouthpiece of the true invisible King above.

The signs of national revival shown by the transition to

¹ See p. 72.

² Ps. xcix. 6.

a monarchy, and the vigorous action against Nahash which was its first result, had, meanwhile roused the Philistines, whose supremacy was thus threatened. Always formidable, such an enemy was doubly so in the political prostration of Israel at this time. They were now in the height of their power. Holding the most fruitful part of Palestine, they were alike industrious in the field and in the city. Their harvests of grain; their vines, their olives, and their fruit, were a mine of wealth. The Hebrews had borrowed from them the word for flax,¹ which they grew largely in their plains and wove into linen in their towns. On the south they had wide tracts of pasture land over which vast flocks of sheep wandered.² The cities were busy with many crafts and occupations. As a military people their army furnished employment to numerous chariot builders, makers of coats of mail, helmets, shields, weapons, etc. Their skill in the arts of luxury has already been noticed,³ and the massive strength of their cities attested their skill as builders.

In commerce the Philistines were less famous than the Phenicians, but they were still remarkable. Their ships are spoken of in the Greek version of Isaiah,⁴ but they seem to have been used principally in the coasting trade and in that with Egypt. The transit of goods through the country, which was crossed by the great caravan routes, was of much greater importance. That from the Euphrates, through Syria and inner Palestine, ran along the coast, to Egypt. Other tracts branched off to the Peninsula of Sinai, to the two bays of the Red Sea on each side of it, and to Arabia. The security of these high roads of trade formed the great aim of Philistine policy. Their invasion of Israel had,

¹ Pistim. Hitzig, *Urgeschichte der Philistaer*, p. 267.

2 Chron. xvii. 11. ³ See *ante*, p. 1. ⁴ Chap. xi. 14. *Sept.*

indeed, above all, for its object, the control of the routes of traffic through the country, and the struggle against them had consequently for its theatre the neighbourhood of these great lines of commerce. One of these, leading from the lands south and south-west, wound through the central hills, from the ford of the Jordan at Jericho, through the narrow pass of Michmash, across the hill country of Ephraim; the other ran along the plain of Esdraelon, through the hills of Gilboa and little Hermon, to the fords of the Jordan in the depression of the river valley at Bethshean; the entrepot of the trade to and from western Asia. Egyptian horses and chariots were a main branch of the Philistine commerce, the supply of these for Palestine and also for the Hittite and Syrians kingdoms being in their hands.¹ Gaza, moreover, was the chief depot of a great traffic with Egypt, in incense, myrrh, styrax, ladanum, cinnamon from India, and cassia and cardamine² from Arabia.³ They had indeed factories and settlements on the shore of Arabia, and held their own in the trade with the great East.⁴

Their military forces were at once very numerous and complete. Squadrons of war chariots and cavalry, and a great force of infantry, subdued the neighbouring tribes;

¹ 1 Kings x. 28, 29. 2 Chron. i. 16, 17. The Egyptians had succeeded in raising a breed of horses of special size and strength. In the lists of booty taken at the sack of Thebes by Assurbanipal in B.C. 665, one of the chief items is "great horses." Much better suited for war than the horses of Arabia and Syria they were in demand over all western Asia, Solomon afterwards making them a special article of trade, as the Philistines had done before him. Lenormant, *Premières Civilizations*, vol. i. pp. 312-313.

² Styrax = gum of storax shrub (Palestine). Ladanum = exudation from the rock rose. Cardamine—a plant allied to our bitter cress. Its leaves were used as a drug.

³ Heeren, *Ideen*, vol. i. p. 109; *Zusätze*, p. 217. ⁴ Joel iii. 8; iv. 3

the chariot warriors especially constituting the aristocracy of the army, and bearing a great name for valour. Like the equipment of the Spartan hoplites, that of the leaders of the heavy-armed troops was designed to strike terror into the hearts of their foes. A round helmet of copper, a coat of scaled mail of the same metal, and brazen greaves on the legs, defended the person. At their back hung a copper-headed spear, a sword depended at their side, and they bore in their hand a long iron-tipped lance. Each had his own armour-bearer, who always attended him, carrying a huge shield to cover the whole body of his master. The chariot fighters, also, were armed with a similar glittering panoply, and went into battle with a chariot driver and armour-bearer at their side.¹ The light-armed troops were largely archers;² the Cretans in their ranks distinguishing themselves so specially with the bow, that a band of them, enlisted by David as his body guard, are called indifferently Cretans³ or bowmen. The army, as a whole, was divided into hundreds and thousands; the entire force of each "lord" of a Philistine district constituting a "host."⁴ To fortify their camps, place garrisons and military posts, and divide their soldiery into flying columns, to overrun and devastate the territory of their enemies, was familiar to them. But the nation did not confine itself to service in its own armies; like the free-lances of the middle ages, its sons were ready to hire themselves out to fight under the standard of any prince.⁵

¹ 1 Sam. xvii. 4, 8; xxi. 9, 10; xxii. 10.

² 1 Sam. xxxi. 3.

³ *Lit.* Cherethites.

⁴ 1 Sam. xvii. 1; xxix. 1.

⁵ 1 Chron. xviii. 17. 2 Sam. viii. 18; xv. 18; xx. 7, 20. 1 Kings i. 38, 44. On the subject of the Philistines, see Hitzig, *Urgeschichte*, *passim*. Kneucker, in *Bib. Lex.*, vol. iv. pp. 541-559. *Reichm.* Winer. *Herzog*, etc.

The first step taken by Saul towards the war of liberation was the enrolment of 3,000 men, the nucleus of a standing army. Two thousand of these remained with himself in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and 1,000 with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin, a few miles off, the rest of the people having been sent home. Hostilities began by Jonathan overpowering the Philistine tribute collector,¹ at Geba, with the military post under



GILGAL. North-west view over the plain of Jericho. Lieut. Conder, R.E.

his command—an act of daring soon known far and near in the Philistine country. The signal thus given, Saul forthwith formally proclaimed an insurrection, sounding the war horns through all Israel,² and summoning a general muster of the people at Gilgal. But the Philistines

¹ 1 Sam. xiii. 4, for “garrison,” read as in text. *Ewald and Graetz.*

² 1 Sam. xiii. 3. *Sept.*

on their side were not inactive. Three thousand chariots,¹ 6000 cavalry, and a great force of infantry toiled up from the lowlands and crowded the passes of Benjamin. The excitement amongst the Hebrews was terrible. The braver hearts hastened to the rendezvous at Gilgal, the town farthest from the dreaded foe. The less resolute fled beyond the Jordan, or hid in the caves of the limestone hills around, or in their clefts, or in grain pits,² or in dry cisterns.³ Meanwhile, Samuel had directed Saul to wait for him seven days at Gilgal; for though nominally king, it was a condition of his rule that he acted only as the prophet instructed him.⁴ In the interval, the company of prophets from Jericho, with their hymns and psalms, sung to the harp and other instruments,⁵ may well have visited the camp, to rouse their brethren to courage and devotion in the great struggle before them.

A part of the Philistine army of invasion had now

¹ Peshito Version. The Hebrew number, 30,000, seems an error of copyists. "Perhaps the number ought to be 1000." *Maclear*.

² Subterranean retreats. *Graetz*.

³ 1 Sam. xiii. 6. Furrer (*Palästina*, p. 103) speaks of the number of subterranean corn-magazines in the country, dug out to hide the grain from enemies. These may have been the "pits."

⁴ 1 Sam. vii. 15; x. 8; xiii. 3, 4.

⁵ The instruments mentioned in 1 Sam. x. 5, as played by the prophets are: 1. the Nebel—translated in our version "psaltery;" in Amos v. 23, "viol;" in the Prayer Book version of the Psalms, "lute." It was in fact a guitar with from six to twelve strings. 2. The Toph, or "tabret," was a tambourine, with pieces of metal in the hoop round it to make a jingling sound. 3. The Chalil, or "pipe," a single or double flageolet of simple construction, often played to the accompaniment of the tambourine. 4. The Kinnor, or "harp," needs no explanation. There were small harps, played while the performer was walking or in motion; others, larger, were played as with us. The smaller harp had, apparently, ten strings. Ps. xxxiii. 2. Jos., *Ant.*, VII. xii. 3.

reached Michmash, the present Mukhmas, the farthest point of their occupation to the east; a spot about seven miles north of Jebus, now Jerusalem, on the northern edge of the great Wady Suweinit—"the valley of the little thorn, or acacia"—which forms the main line of communication between the sea-coast plain and the Jordan valley. It runs through the very centre of the territory of Benjamin. Opposite the village of Michmash on its southern side lay Geba; Bethel rose about four miles to the north, over successive hills; and Ramah and Gibeah were on the south, at short distances behind Geba. The part at which the Philistines had established themselves, consisted, Josephus tells us, of a precipice with three tops, ending in a long sharp tongue, and protected by surrounding cliffs believed to be unscalable.¹ Fortunately, the spot may be easily identified. Exactly such a natural stronghold exists immediately east of the present village of Mukhmas, and is still called the "fortress" by the peasantry. It is a ridge forming three knolls rising above a perpendicular crag, and ending in a narrow tongue to the east, with cliffs below. Opposite this fastness, on the south, there is a crag of equal height, seemingly too steep to climb; the two forming "a sharp rock on one side, and a sharp rock on the other." Of these the one on the south is called Seneh—"the acacia"—in the Bible, and, as has been said, this name is still given in a modern form to the whole valley. That on the north is called Bozeh, or "shining," a name very apt, as its chalky strata lie almost all day in the full light of an Eastern sun, while the other side of the ravine is as constantly in the shade.² The whole country round has a most forbidding aspect. Huge grey rocks completely

¹ Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, V. ii. 1; *Ant.*, VI. vi. 2

² Conder's *Tent Work*, p. 256.

hide every patch of soil, and the poor huts of the village,



VALLEY OF MICHMASH, LOOKING EAST.
From a photograph by Lieut. Kitchener, R.E.

with the ruins that encompass them, can hardly be distinguished from the rocks themselves.¹

¹ Porter, *Handbook*, pp. 215, 216. Grove, in *Dict. of Bible*, vol. ii. p. 354.

While the Philistines were gathering at Michmash, Saul remained at Gilgal, in eager impatience for the arrival of Samuel to give a religious sanction to the war. But day after day passed and he did not appear, and every hour lost seemed to endanger the result of the levy of the tribes. It was to be dreaded that the Philistines would descend into the Jordan valley and attack the almost unarmed Hebrews, who, moreover, were rapidly deserting. Many had already returned home, perhaps in alarm, and it looked as if all would ere long do so. To faith like that of Gideon this would have been indifferent, but Saul had no such support, and was greatly distressed. At last, on the seventh day, to the close of which he should have waited, he determined himself to offer the sacrifices necessary before taking the field, though Samuel, as the representative of Jehovah, had required him to await his coming that they might be offered by him. But while he was still beside the altar, Samuel appeared. A great offence against the laws of the theocracy had been committed. Saul had followed his own will, instead of passively obeying that of his God, the true King, as represented by the prophet. A test imposed on him to try his loyalty to his invisible King had been disregarded. His act showed a distrust of God; as though after choosing him, He would forsake him in the hour of need. It also showed a spirit of self-assertion; as if he could make war by himself without the assistance and counsel of God expressed through His prophet. The offence thus involved the whole principle of the absolute subordination of the theocratic king to the will of Jehovah as revealed by His representative, and one who thus violated it was unfit for the office of king in Israel. No excuses of Saul availed. It was a question not of detail but of principle. He had acted

as if independent, instead of bearing himself humbly, as the vicerent of God. With no adequate sense of his obligations, he had set mere ritual observances above the essence of the Divine law. To use Samuel's words at a later time, he had fancied that "sacrifice was more than obedience, and the fat of rams more than hearkening to God's word."¹ He had broken the fundamental law by which he held his high office. It was impossible that his kingdom should continue. To his dismay, Samuel, as the representative of the God thus offended, announced that he could no longer recognise him, and returned at once from Gilgal to Gibeah. He had shown himself to have no real faith in God—the first requirement in a king of Israel.

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 22.





CHAPTER V.

THE REJECTED OF GOD.

AT once distressed and openly discredited before his people by Samuel's retirement from Gilgal, Saul made his way by some roundabout track to Gibeah,¹ where he pitched his tent under a pomegranate tree by "the precipice"² with the remnant of his force. It numbered only 600 men, but these were necessarily the bravest.³ So small a band, however, seemed incapable of opposing the strong Philistine army, though the remembrance of Gideon's story might have cheered both them and their leaders. But Saul and Jonathan, for the time at least, forgot this. There seemed no hope for their country, and the thought filled them with the bitterest dejection, which expressed itself with true Oriental sensibility in loud weeping.⁴ They alone had swords; their followers had only such rude weapons as clubs and goads.⁵ Worst of all, Samuel's leaving had deprived them of the means of consulting God, a step without

¹ 1 Sam. xiii. 15. *Sept.*

² 1 Sam. xiv. 2. Migron = the precipice.

³ The *Sept.* (1 Sam. xiii. 15) adds, "and the rest of the people went up to battle after the men of war," as if there had been 600 fighting men, and a crowd of volunteers behind.

⁴ 1 Sam. xiii. 16. *Sept.*

Necessarily so, from the general disarming.

which nothing important was done in antiquity, either in peace or war. As the only course open in such circumstances, therefore, he sent to Nob for the priest Ahitub, the grandson of Eli, who had the high-priestly ephod, and could thus give the oracles desired.

But these dark hours of the infant monarchy were about to close. Geba, as has been said, lay on the other side of the pass of Michmash, at hardly an hour's distance, but the steepness of the rocks made access from one to the other impossible for any organized force, except by a long circuit. Broad at its eastern part, the wady here contracts to hardly ten paces across, and is hemmed in by perpendicular walls of rock. Precisely at this spot Jonathan undertook one day to climb up, on the Philistine side, and his armour-bearer followed him. A single false step would have hurled them to instant death, but by skill they succeeded in reaching in safety a point from which they were seen by the enemy's post. Astonished at their appearance in a spot thought inaccessible from below, the guard, though fancying they might be only the first of a number, treated the matter lightly. "Look here," cried one to the other, "the Hebrews are creeping out of the holes where they have been hiding themselves!" Then mocking the climbers, they asked them: "Come up, won't you; we should like to make your acquaintance!"¹ It had, however, been agreed between Jonathan and his armour-bearer, that such a call on the part of the Philistines should be accepted as a sign to go to the top and attack them boldly. Once there, the mocking soon ceased, for in a few moments twenty men had fallen before the arrows of the two assailants, who followed up their first

¹ This is the meaning of these words. See Lenormant, *La Dimination*, p. 98.

onset by hurling a shower of stones at their foe, and plying their slings against them; weapons terrible in Benjamite hands. The post yielding before such a fierce assault, Jonathan and his companion pressed on, keeping up a keen fire of stones.¹ Confounded at an attack where they seemed most secure, and not knowing how many might be climbing up after the first two, the Philistines fell into wild confusion, each thinking his neighbour an enemy, and at last broke into flight, the panic spreading from the outpost to the whole host. The very earth seemed to tremble, or really did so at the moment,² as the multitude, with huge clamour, swayed hither and thither in its terror.³ Meanwhile, Saul, from his lookout on the height of Gibeah, no sooner saw the confusion and wild tumult among the enemy across the ravine, than he hastened to Michmash with his 600 men, and completed the defeat; the Hebrews who had been drafted into the Philistine army passing over to the side of their brethren in the midst of the battle. Those, moreover, who till now had hidden in the clefts and caves of the hills, emboldened by the flight of their foe, eagerly joined the assailants, so that the band of Saul, which at first had been only 600, speedily rose to 10,000. Every town, besides, through which the fugitives passed, rose in their rear and helped to destroy them, Saul's troops, tired as they were, pressing on also in their track, by Bethaven, over hill and valley, to Ajalon, more than twenty miles distant, and giving them no opportunity to rally.

¹ 1 Sam. xiv. 14. *Sept.* The words are, "with arrows, throwing stones, and pebbles of the ground (from their slings)."

² "Perhaps only the tumult and confusion of the Philistine host is meant." *Kirkpatrick.* See chap. iv. 5.

³ 1 Sam. xiv. 15.

Further pursuit, which would have secured their utter destruction, was checked by an apparently trivial accident, which, however, had momentous results. "Saul," says the Greek Bible, "committed a great error that day." With the inconsiderate rashness which was one of his defects, he had enjoined his men to taste nothing during the pursuit, and had added a curse on any one who should break the order. But Jonathan, ever among the foremost, knew nothing of this, and feeling exhausted, dipped the end of the spear or lance¹ in his hand into one of the honeycombs, in the hollow trees of a wood through which they were passing, and took some honey.² Told of his father's command, he at once expressed his regret at it as a hindrance to the complete success of the day. Meanwhile the whole host followed his example of seeking some refreshment. Utterly worn out when they reached Ajalon—"the haunt of gazelles"—on the hillside, above a broad rich valley stretching down to the lowlands, they rushed on the sheep, oxen, and calves, in the spoil, and in their fierce hunger would not wait till the blood was drained from the carcasses, but ate it with the flesh. This, at least, was a distinct sin, demanding instant prohibition. A great stone was therefore rolled before Saul, and a command sent out that all oxen and sheep should be brought to it and slain there,³ that the blood, which in all cases was sacred to God, might

¹ *Gesenius*.

² Tristram's *Natural History of Bible*, p. 322. Bees in the East are not, as in England, kept in hives. They are left wild. The forests literally flow with honey. Large combs may be seen on the trees, dropping with it. *Roberts*.

³ The great stone was an extemporized altar; the blood was an offering to Jehovah. The idea of a single central sanctuary had not as yet risen. 1 Sam. xiv. 34, 35. See Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels*, vol. i. p. 18.

properly drain away. Meanwhile, news of this flagrant transgression of a law generally observed with an almost superstitious reverence, threw Saul into great distress. Ever eager to observe the Law exactly in its letter—with which alone he had sympathy—but now much more so, to vindicate himself from blame in connection with Samuel having left him, he fancied that pouring out the blood on his rude altar would secure forgiveness for the sin committed. Night having come, and Saul having consulted Ahitub, the priest,¹ whom he always kept at his side, whether he should continue the pursuit, no answer was vouchsafed. This was enough to rouse the superstitious mind of Saul. Some one, he felt sure, had disobeyed him, and he must put him to death, whoever he might be, in fulfilment of his oath. Eager to show his zeal for religion, as he in his wild way understood it, he instantly demanded the name of the first offender, but no one would betray Jonathan. Determined to find out, he now resolved to appeal to the sacred ordeal of the lot. Taking Jonathan beside him, apart from the multitude, he cried aloud, as we learn from the Greek Bible,—“O Lord God of Israel, wherefore hast Thou not answered Thy servant this day? If the iniquity be in me or in Jonathan my son, O Lord God of Israel, give Urim; and if it be in Thy people Israel, give, I pray Thee, Thummim.”² The high-priestly oracle thus invoked,

¹ The *Septuagint* reads, 1 Sam. xiv. 18: “And Saul said to Ahia, bring hither the ephod; for he bore the ephod at that time before the children of Israel.”

² 1 Sam. xiv. 41. Wellhausen, Ewald, Thenius, and Kuenen thus translate the *Sept.* and *Vulgate*. If they be correct, it would seem as if the judgment of the Urim and Thummim was obtained by a special method of casting lots, employed on the present occasion.

Saul and Jonathan were taken, and then Jonathan alone. Left to himself, Saul would forthwith have put even his darling son to death, but for the determined interference of the multitude around, who rightly protected him, as the hero of a great deliverance vouchsafed by God. Saul had therefore to content himself with offering a sacrifice in his stead.¹

Freed from destructive pursuit by this interruption, the remnant of the Philistines reached their cities humbled and enraged at their defeat, but determined ere long to wipe out the disgrace. The joy at so unexpected a victory, on the other hand, rekindled enthusiasm among the Hebrews. They could no longer be accused of cowardice, and once more had weapons with which they felt themselves able to fight, under a king so valiant and resolute as Saul had proved.

Two great military successes had now strengthened Saul's position, and made the people willing to submit to his rule. With such proofs of the value of national unity, they gladly supported him in the steps necessary to prevent the Philistines regaining the supremacy, though these involved a centralization of power very different from their ancient republican freedom. He had already gathered round him 3,000 men,² but they seem to have been volunteers, free to leave at pleasure. These were now, apparently, enrolled as a standing force; any strong or brave youths or men of whom he heard being constantly added to them.³ There is no notice, however, of any posts being stationed where they would seem to have been most needed, at the mouths of the hill passes

¹ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 51, thinks some man, presumably a prisoner, was offered in his stead. *Lenormant, La Divination*, p. 82.

² 1 Sam. xiii. 2; xxiv. 2; xxvi. 2. 1 Chron. xii. 29.

³ 1 Sam. xiv. 52.

leading from the lowlands. Abner, Saul's cousin, who had contributed greatly to the victories of the past, was named to the command of the whole force.¹ A body guard was also formed,² some of whom, if not all, famous as running footmen, acted as the king's messengers. But they had other more disagreeable duties, for they were the king's executioners and police, as well as his couriers.³ Over these was set Doeg, an Edomite by birth, who had probably passed into the service of Saul during some of his conflicts with Edom, and, having joined the community of Israel, was afterwards head of the royal herdsmen.⁴ They were "the young men" in immediate attendance on the king, of whom David became afterwards the head. The fighting men, moreover, had a staff of officers, captains of thousands and of hundreds: many of them doubtless relatives and connections of Saul, or favoured personages attracted to the new royal centre of honour. To Jonathan, Abner, and afterwards to David, however, was reserved the special favour of sitting at the king's table.⁵

The patriarchal simplicity of Samuel must have felt in these steady advances towards royal state, a foreboding of the results he had predicted, as entailed by the political revolution in which he had unwillingly played a chief

¹ 1 Sam. xiv. 50.

² 1 Sam. xvi. 15, 17; xxii. 14, 17.

³ 1 Sam. xxii. 17.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxi. 7. Graetz reads: "The mightiest of Saul's runners, or couriers." The *Septuagint* says, "Who tended Saul's mules." David afterwards had chiefs of his camels, of his asses, and of his flocks. 1 Chron. xxvii. 30, 31. Dean Stanley compares Doeg to the Roman Comes-stabuli = constable. The word used is translated variously in our version, "footmen," "runners," "guards," "posts."

⁵ 1 Sam. xx. 25

part He had, moreover, already been forced to the conclusion, from what had happened at Gilgal, that, in spite of his early hopes of him, Saul was not the man for a theocratic king. Yet, though forced to leave him, and thus publicly—as the recognised prophet and representative of God, the true invisible King of Israel—to disown him as His viceroy, he still clung fondly to the hope that he might yet retrace his steps. Another opportunity, at least, would be given him of showing his true spirit.

The great Bedouin tribe of the Amalekites¹ still continued the hereditary enemies of Israel. At Sinai, in the Wilderness wandering, and in the days of Gideon, they had harassed and troubled it, and, now, under Saul, appear to have been a restless enemy of Judah and Simeon in the south of the land. The sword of their chief, "Agag,"² had made women childless.³ To leave him to plunder and destroy their brethren would have been unworthy of Saul and the other tribes. Judah, moreover, had only lately been won



AN ARAB VILLAGE.
From L'Egypte—État Modern.

¹ See vol. i. p. 351 ; vol. ii. pp. 256-7.

² Agag = the Consumer or Destroyer.

³ 1 Sam. xv. 33.

to a hearty union with the rest of the nation, and would give new life and vigour to the whole, if not weakened by an enemy.

Samuel, therefore, once more came to Saul, commanding him in the name of God who had anointed him as king, to undertake a sacred war against Amalek, devoting it and all it had to destruction, as accursed. Nor did Saul for a moment hesitate. Summoning the muster of all Israel, including Judah, he marched at once to the distant southern districts. Warning the Kenites, a friendly Midianitish stock, who were at peace with their warlike neighbours, to separate themselves from them, he lost no time in making his attack. True to Eastern tactics, he surprised Agag, now weakened by the loss of his Kenite allies,¹ took his city, which was near Carmel, by Hebron,² and slew, or made prisoners of the whole tribe, except a remnant, who succeeded in saving themselves by hasty flight.³ Among other captives was Agag himself, and the victors, moreover, gathered a rich booty, taken by the Amalekites—Arab fashion—in their wide raids, from the trade caravans passing between the Euphrates and Egypt. Vast flocks of sheep and goats, and great herds of oxen and camels, fell into their hands. But, in obedience to Samuel's command, all this wealth was to be destroyed, as "devoted" to God, or accursed;⁴ not even a trace of Amalek being

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 5.

² 1 Sam. xv. 7.

³ 1 Sam. xv. 12.

⁴ The word used, "haram," is translated in our version "utterly destroy," "consecrate," "utterly to slay," "utterly to make away with," "to devote to the Lord," Lev. xxvii. 28. "Devoted by men," Lev. xxvii. 29. "To forfeit," Ezra x. 8. A thing "consecrated" or "devoted" to God, could not be put to any use, and hence the consecration implied in effect, destruction. The noun *hārem*, therefore, means a thing "devoted," "cursed," and in 1 Sam. xv. 21 is paraphrased "things which should have been

left. Once in their possession, however, the Hebrews were very loath to destroy such a proud and useful reward of their valour, and drove these off with them, on their return home. Unfortunately for himself, Saul, overawed, and afraid to oppose them, winked at this disobedience, thinking perhaps, besides, that an addition of this kind to the general wealth was needed by the people, impoverished as they had been by the oppressive tyranny of the Philistines.

Such a victory over the renowned Amalekites raised equal pride in Israel and in Saul. Jabesh Gilead and Michmash were great deeds, but it was much more glorious to have crushed the terrible Agag. Led in chains, he was brought back with the army to grace its triumph. Saul's early humility gave place to haughty pride at the thought of such exploits. A memorial of these, raised in the oasis of Carmel, must commemorate his glory; most probably a stone tablet like that of Mesha, the king of Moab,¹ though Jerome fancied it was an arch of myrtles, palms, and olives. Meanwhile, a vision had warned Samuel that the king had not fully performed his commission, and was hence finally rejected by God. It was hard to announce such a fatal catastrophe.

utterly destroyed." In 1 Kings xx. 42, it is translated "whom I appointed to utter destruction."

¹ It is called "Yad," a hand. Graetz thinks it was a rock hewn into the shape of a finger-post, without writing on it. *Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 186. In 2 Sam. xviii. 18, it is translated "pillar," and refers to the memorial of himself raised by Absalom. In Isa. lvi. 5, the word "place" is *lit.* "hand." In Persia the domes of mosques are often surmounted by the figure of an outspread hand. Some Roman standards had the same ornament on the top of the staff, perhaps as a symbol of strength and power. That it was something like the Moabite Stone is the shrewd conjecture of *Vigouroux*, vol. iii. p. 248.

For a whole night he "cried to the Lord"¹ that he might be spared so distressing an office. With the morning light, however, he went out to meet Saul; but hearing on the way of his erection of the memorial to his own glory, instead of humbly acknowledging that the victory was from God, he turned aside and went to Gilgal. Thither, therefore, the king followed him with his force.

As if nothing had happened amiss, Saul, on reaching Gilgal, made his way to the prophet, confidently telling him "he had fulfilled his commands." Doubtless he thought he had done so, for the necessity of his acting in harmony with Samuel, the representative of Jehovah, was a thing he did not comprehend. With no deep religious instincts, his obedience was capricious and partial. "What then means the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen that I hear?" answered Samuel, pressing him hard. The Greek Bible adds, that as Samuel met him, "behold he was offering the firstfruits of the spoil which he had brought from the Amalekites, as a burnt-offering to the Lord,"² and this coloured his reply. "The people had spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to Jehovah, and the rest had been utterly destroyed." It was a mere hollow excuse; but, if it had been true, literal obedience to the command of God, which was imperative, had been neglected. Of this Samuel forthwith reminded him. Was not he, once so obscure, but now the anointed head of the tribes of Israel, the people of God, bound by covenant to obey God in all things. To seize the spoil and to spare Agag was to disobey. Explanation was vain. "Has God," said Samuel, "as much pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience? Behold obedience is better

¹ The word means to "cry out, as when one is in pain."

² 1 Sam. xv. 13.

than sacrifice : to hearken dutifully to commands is better than the fat of rams ! For the sin of witchcraft—that is, superstition—springs from disobedience, and the sin of teraphim worship—that is, idolatry—springs from opposition to God's will.”¹ Then came the terrible sentence, “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected thee from being king over Israel.” In vain the humbled king at last pleaded the simple truth—that he had been afraid of the people—and begged the prophet to turn back with him to the altar, that he might cast himself down before it and crave forgiveness.²

The hour was past for yielding. Samuel would not go back, but turned to leave. Still more terrified, Saul now clutched his mantle, to hold him, if it might be ; but it rent in his hands. “So,” said Samuel, stopping a moment, “has God rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou ! And even should Israel itself be torn in two as a consequence of this, the Strength of Israel will neither lie nor repent, for He is not a man to change His mind.”³ “Honour me at least before the elders of my tribe and of Israel, and turn back,” groaned the king, as his only remaining entreaty—and Samuel gave way so far as to go to the altar, and let Saul humble himself before God, at its foot. But the prophet, though tender where free to be so, was stern and unbending in his fidelity to the command he had been divinely directed to lay on Saul. Ordering the king of the Amalekites to be brought, Agag was led to his presence in chains, crying in unmanly grief, as he came, “O, how bitter, bitter is death !”⁴ But the only answer of Samuel was,

¹ *Graetz*, vol. i, p. 187.

² 1 Sam. xv. 25.

³ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 187. 1 Sam. xv. 27, 28.

⁴ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 187, after *Sept.* and *Syriac.*

that as women had been made childless by his sword, his mother should now be made sad as they, and he forthwith ordered him to be cut in pieces.

After that day the prophet and Saul never met again. Samuel returned to his home at Ramah; the king to his at Gibeah. It was the crisis in his life. His pride had been humbled; his victory changed to a defeat. The words of Samuel rang in his ears, that he was forsaken by God; that the kingdom would pass from his house, and, above all, that it would be given to a better than himself. If so, that rival must be now alive and would presently be anointed, to replace him. Much as he had shrunk from assuming power, he eagerly clung to it now he possessed it. Nor could he revenge himself on Samuel. Lowered in the eyes of his people, he yet dared not touch the prophet, if he would. To do so would rouse the whole people at once. His dreaded rival was unknown to him; any one round him might be he. Besides, even if he could rid himself of both prophet and rival, the curse of God was beyond his power to avert. The seeds of a brooding melancholy and wild jealousy, that soon passed into outbursts of madness, had been sown in his heart.

To distract his mind he threw himself into warlike excitements. There were enemies on every side. Raids were therefore undertaken against the Moabites, Ammonites, and other peoples;¹ in every case successfully.² Nothing seemed more likely to keep back the curse which he dreaded, than the popularity gained by warlike fame. A rival would find it harder to oppose one so much in credit with the nation.

¹ The *Sept.* adds "and against the house of Hazor," that is, against Syria. But this is doubtful, though Ewald accepts it.

² 1 Sam. xiv. 47.

In his desperation he thought of a last way to secure, perhaps, a return of God's favour, and thus regain his lost position. If he had fallen by neglecting to carry out one Divine command to the letter, he would show his repentance by a harsh execution of what had been required by the Law, in other directions. Samuel had traced the decline of Israel to their adoption of Canaanite manners and religion, and there were still some settlements of the old population in the midst of the tribes. He—Saul—would now show his zeal for the national purity¹ by carrying out the command² to smite and destroy all these remnants. This he presently did; even the Gibeonites, who had voluntarily submitted to Joshua and had had their lives secured by an oath, being nearly exterminated,³ and their town, Gibeon, apparently seized and given to Saul's relations.⁴ With the Canaanites were also included in this fierce proscription all who followed the secret magic arts of heathenism.⁵ The Law commanded that all who had a familiar spirit and all wizards should be stoned,⁶ and he would honour it. There was certainly need of reformation in regard to such unholy practices, for no fewer than eight kinds of magic are mentioned as having been in use. "Diviners," wrought by secret spells; enchanters used incantations; there were vendors of charms and amulets; a special class invoked familiar spirits—that is, spirits over whom they had power; wizards, or wise-men, followed other branches of the black art, and necromancers consulted the dead.⁷ Superstition was rampant. But Saul had received no personal command to assail either the helpless

¹ 2 Sam. xxi. 2.² Deut. vii. 2, 24.³ 2 Sam. xxi. 1-6.⁴ 1 Chron. viii. 29-40, ix. 35-44.⁵ 1 Sam. xxviii. 3, 9.⁶ Lev. xx. 27.⁷ *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Magic*.

Canaanite population, or the dealers in magic spells and incantations, and acted solely on his own authority in this crusade against them. His own will or caprice, not the immediate injunction of God, was in this case, as in others, his law. Even his zeal, moreover, showed his crude and gross ideas. Fanatical as to rites and the letter of the Law; the higher devotion of the spirit, which is the spring of loving trust, holy life, and cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, was strange to him. Required to ignore his own personality, and act only as the servant of God, he constantly let his self-will prevail, and acted, more or less, as if, like the kings around, he were free to do as he chose. He fancied, however, that blind passionate zeal would neutralize Samuel's reproaches of his having forsaken "the ways of God;" though while he was hunting out wizards from the land he himself still cherished a lingering faith in their arts. To crown all, altars built by him, rose at various places.¹ Who could be more zealous for Jehovah than he!

While thus eager to show himself an enthusiastic reformer, and strict enforcer of the Law, he was equally bent on surrounding his kingly office with the pomp and circumstance which awes the multitude. He assumed a royal turban,² which he did not lay aside even in battle.³ Once the modest tiller of his father's land, those who approached him must now prostrate themselves at his feet.⁴ He must also, like other kings, have a harem. He had married his first wife, Ahinoam, while he was still an obscure youth. He now took several others; among them the fair and clever Rizpah.⁵ Nor is it without significance, as marking his confused and vague religious ideas,

¹ 1 Sam. xiv. 35.
stones. Zech. ix. 16.

² Apparently ornamented with precious
³ 2 Sam. i. 10.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxiv. 8.

⁵ 2 Sam. iii. 7; xii. 8; xxi. 8.

that while the names of some of his sons were: Abiel, "El is my Father"; Jehiel, "may El triumph"; Malchishua, "My king (God) is (my) help," and Meribbaal, "he who contends with Baal," known also as Mephibosheth, "he who treats contemptuously the idols";¹ the name of one was Eshbaal, "Baal's man."

The court was made as splendid as possible. The booty from the various wars, especially from the campaign against Amalek, had brought wealth into the land. Prosperity, moreover, had returned with union and a strong government, and the daughters of Israel could boast of wearing the fine white linen of Egypt, adorned with purple stripes and ornaments of gold.² Saul's own daughters, indeed, wore the trailing purple-blue robes of princesses.³

But peace could not last while the Philistines had their defeat to avenge, and it was on the breaking out of a new war that Saul first met his future successor, David; henceforth, to his diseased mind, the very rival he dreaded. From this time till his last fatal battle, Saul's story is that of a man struggling with ever darkening shadows of madness and jealous despair, and giving way to paroxysms of fury and despotism. So haunted was he, indeed, by his dread of David, and so inextricably are the lives of the two from this period joined, that the details will be better treated hereafter.

Years had passed since the defeat of Goliath at Ephes-dammim, when a new invasion of the Philistines again roused the tribes. This time its scene was the great Plain of Esdraelon, through which ran the caravan route from Asia, of which the invaders wished to have the control. Their army had reached the plain by the sea-coast

¹ *Mühlau und Volck*, p. 496.

² 2 Sam. i. 24. *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 192. ³ 2 Sam. xiii. 18.

road, as best suited for chariots and cavalry, and had encamped at its eastern end, not far from Sunem, where Gideon, long before, had fought the Midianite host. Hastily levying the tribes, Saul at once marched north, and after encamping for a time at the foot of Mount Gilboa, moved to the north side of the hills near Endor, where the Philistine chariots had less room to deploy. Brave as he was by nature, the sight of the vast force of horse and foot in full armour, arrayed against him—to be opposed only by the spears and slings of Israel—shook his resolution and courage. His manhood indeed was already unstrung by long mental disease. He was in the awful position, as it seemed in antiquity, of being unable to consult either priest or prophet, for he had massacred the priests at Nob; Abiathar alone escaping. From him, a fugitive, under the hated protection of David, he could not enquire or hope for an oracle. He had driven away Samuel by his disregard of his obligation as a theocratic king. Heaven, as it seemed, was thus shut against him.¹ For years it had been ever clearer that the doom pronounced on him had been inevitable, and now, perhaps, he felt this. To begin a battle without Divine omens or counsel was enough of itself to unman him, for even the heathen around would not fight till they had learned that they had their gods on their side. In his agony he tried to bring on dreams in his sleep, hoping thus, at least, to get revelations. But even dreams were refused him. Rather than want any voice from above, therefore, he turned to the very arts whose professors he had so ruthlessly driven from the land. An old woman, a sorceress, still lingered at Endor, for where there is superstition it will find agents to turn it to profit.

¹ Lenormant, *La Divination*, p. 82. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1858, p. 46.

Seeking her, in deep disguise, by night,¹ he begged she would invoke the spirit of Samuel, who had died shortly before. Conjurations and mutterings followed, to bring some apparent phantom before him whom she might pronounce to be Samuel, but both she and Saul were appalled by the result. What she could never, herself, have done, was divinely vouchsafed. An apparition suddenly rose before them, which Saul and the woman recognised at once, by its mantle, as Samuel. But it came with no words of comfort or hope. The doom, long before uttered at Gilgal, was once more announced, with the addition that God had indeed forsaken him and chosen David in his place, and that to-morrow, he and his sons would be in the regions of the dead, with the shade that addressed him. Unnerved by the sight and the awful words, Saul, weak with watching and fasting all the day before and through the night, in the hope of a vision, was too faint to make his way back to the camp, till he had forced himself to take food. Then, at last, he and his attendants rejoined his army.

With a leader paralyzed by such forebodings, victory could not be expected. The ground, moreover, was as favourable to the Philistines as it was the reverse to the Hebrews. Green plains led to the slopes of Gilboa, swelling after a time into low heights rising bare and stony. Behind these, the many summits of the hills, shot up abruptly 500 or 600 feet, bleak, white and barren; their only growths, spots of scrub oak and the mountain thorns and flowers, never wanting, in spring at least, in Palestine.

The attack began the next morning and the Hebrews fought bravely all day.² But they could not withstand

¹ He had to steal past the Philistines to reach her.

² 1 Sam. xxviii. 18.

the chariots, cavalry, and heavily mailed troops of the Philistines. Driven back to Gilboa, they were pursued up the sides of the hills and utterly routed. Three sons of Saul—the darling Jonathan, with Abinadab,¹ and Malchishua—were slain in the field. Saul, still wearing his turban and royal bracelet, at last found himself alone with his armour-bearer, as the Philistine bowmen pressed closer and closer; his shield cast away in his flight, but his spear still in his hand. He would not flee, and he could not let himself be taken, for a shameful death would follow. Leaning heavily therefore on his spear;² “trembling sore because of the archers;”³ perhaps even wounded, but at least recognised and pursued⁴ by the Philistine chariots and horse; he called on his armour-bearer to kill him. On his refusing to do so, the death wound came by Saul’s falling on his own sword. Sinking into the darkness of death⁵ but still conscious, a wild Amalekite, the deadly enemy of Israel, wandering over the field in hope of spoil, “stood on him”—as alleged, at his own request—and gave him a final sword thrust. It may be, however, that this was a mere invention, for

¹ “My father is noble.”

² 2 Sam. i. 6.

³ *Gesenius, Bertheau*, and others (1 Sam. xxxi. 3).

⁴ For “hit,” *Wellhausen* and *Keil* read “found.”

⁵ *Sept.* “deep darkness is on me.” The German version translates the passage “because I am beset” (by the enemy) or “in distress.” Dr. Sachs, in *Zunz’s Bibel*, says, “cramp has seized me,” that is convulsions. So *Ewald, Thenius* and *Keil*. *De Wette* says “anguish,” “the pangs of death,” but quotes others, who render the word “I am wounded,” etc. etc. *Mülhausen und Volck*, “faintness.” 2 Sam. i. 9. The word *Shabatz*, “anguish,” comes from the “being pent up,” “clasped tightly,” as in the case of a jewel by its setting. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1834, p. 673. The margin reads, “My coat of mail or my embroidered-coat hindereth me, that my,” etc.

the sacred narrative tells us that he died by his own act, and that his armour-bearer, seeing him dead, also killed himself.¹

The defeat was terrible. The flower of the youth of Israel and the whole of the king's body guard² lay on the slopes of Gilboa and at its foot. Resting through the night, after the toil of the battle, the Philistines, on the morrow, while stripping the dead, found the bodies of Saul and of his three sons. Saul's head and his weapons were forthwith taken as trophies and sent to Philistia, where the skull was hung up in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod;³ his arms, spear, and sword, with the bow of Jonathan, being sent round the Philistine cities, and at last laid up in the temple of Astarte, at the Canaanite city of Bethshean, in the sunken oasis hard by Gilboa. There, also, the conquerors nailed up the stripped and headless corpse of Saul and that of Jonathan. All the Hebrew towns of Esdraelon and its neighbourhood had been deserted by their population at once, after the battle, and occupied by the Philistines, who now held the entire length of the caravan route for which they had begun the war,

¹ The Amalekite says, that the chariots and horsemen pursued Saul closely; but if he were on the hill, they could hardly do so. 1 Sam. xxxi. 3, says the archers pursued him. Was the story of the Arab a mere invention, to get a reward for the good news?

² *Weiss* and *Erdmann* thus understand the words, xxxi. 6, "all his men."

³ Such decorations of temples were universal in antiquity. Virgil describing that in which Latinus received the ambassadors of Æneas, says:—

"Hung on the pillars all around appears
A row of trophies, helmets, shields, and spears,
And solid bars, and axes, keenly bright,
And naval beaks, and chariots seized in flight."

Æneid. vii. 183.

and could give themselves up to rejoicing. The position of things was sad in the extreme for Israel. Bands of the enemy, following up their victory, marched south and west, and occupied all the important towns.¹ Approaching Gibeah, Saul's own mountain village, they spread a terror which brought with it another sad misfortune to the royal house. The nurse of the prince Mephibosheth, a boy of five, fleeing with him on her shoulder, in her wild haste stumbled and let him fall on the rocks; a disaster of which he bore the result in a lameness of both feet for life. Carried over the Jordan, he was finally entrusted to a chief of Gilead, bearing the famous name of Machir and was brought up in his household.

Saul had reigned about twenty years.² At his accession only a small part of the land had been in foreign hands, the territory of Benjamin and Dan, and part of Ephraim and Judah. But the Philistines were masters of the whole country at his death. All resistance for a time ceased; one brave deed alone redeeming the picture of faintheartedness. The men of Jabesh Gilead, across the Jordan, mindful of the deliverance of their town from Nahash, by Saul, crossed the river in the night, and having taken down his corpse and that of Jonathan from the wall of Bethshean, bore them safely off, and after burning the flesh, to hide the mutilation already inflicted on the bodies, buried the bones, with seven days' lamentation, under a terebinth outside their home. Thus ended a reign which had dawned so brightly.

¹ *Graetz*, p. 1, note 11.

² *Ewald* says 27; *Graetz*, 12; *Winer*, 20; *Dillmann*, 20.





CHAPTER VI.

DAVID.

THE action of Saul after the defeat of Amalek, had at last forced the unwelcome conclusion on Samuel, that, though once so promising, he had failed as a king. Wholly unable to understand his position as subordinate to the true Head of the theocracy, Jehovah, his rashness and self-will, his want of spiritual sympathy with the prophet, and his gross and superficial conceptions of religious duty, proved him unfit to advance the high aims designed for Israel, and tended to found a mere worldly kingdom. Rising at a time of transition, when the old was passing away, and the new struggling into life; he had been rather a greater Jephthah or Samson than a king after God's own heart. Nor could any one easily have filled aright such a unique office, with no precedent to follow. Saul's only examples of authority, for hundreds of years back, in his own people, had been the Judges, and other nations had shown him only Eastern despots. Had he been a truly religious man, his heart would have guided him safely in the main; but placing the ceremonial, as he did, above the spiritual and moral, failure was inevitable. To Samuel, however, this had been an intense sorrow; in part for the sake of one on whom he had built such high hopes, and who had

so many good qualities; but in part also from dread of his introducing despotic forms into Israel, subversive of popular liberty, and opposed to the theocratic constitution.

But the errors and defects of Saul secured the good fortune of his successor. But for the lessons of his fall there could never have been a David. How long it was after the Amalek campaign that Samuel's attention was directed to Bethlehem is not told; nor is it said how he first became acquainted with the future king; for the Divine command to anoint him does not exclude a previous knowledge of his opening character.

The family of Jesse had for centuries been famous in the little hill town, now to become illustrious as that of his favoured son. There he had had a family of eight sons and two daughters,¹ of whom David, the youngest son, appears to have been born about the year B.C. 1085.² The pedigree of the family reached back to the wilderness life of the nation, for Nahshon, one of its ancestors, had been head of the tribe of Judah in those days, and

¹ In 2 Sam. xvii. 25, Amasa is said to be the son of Abigail, daughter of Nahash, and sister of Zeruiah. But in 1 Chron. ii. 16, it is said that Zeruiah and Abigail were sisters of David, and of the other children of Jesse. The Rabbis explain this by saying that Nabash and Jesse are the same person. Dean Stanley supposes that the Nahash mentioned was the king of the Ammonites, against whom Saul fought, and that Jesse married a woman who had been his wife or concubine, Abigail and Zeruiah being her children by Nahash. Dr. G. Grove thinks that Nahash was not the name of Jesse, or a former husband of his wife, but of the wife herself. Steiner thinks Nahash may either have been a first husband of David's mother, or a second wife of Jesse. In 2 Sam. xvii. 27, there is a Nahash who is a great man of Rabbah, the capital of Ammon.

² Weiss, *David und seine Zeit*, p. 43.

had led it on the march.¹ The rich Boaz, the sheik of Bethlehem, had in later generations once more brought its genealogy into notice.² His marriage to the Moabitess Ruth, moreover, had created a relationship with her people, which may well have widened the sympathies of her great descendant, David, and have led him, subsequently, in a time of danger, to entrust his aged parents to the care of the king of Moab, and himself to seek shelter in his territory.³

Jesse was apparently the chief man of Bethlehem, owning lands which came afterwards to his famous son.⁴ He was already old in David's youth,⁵ and as such may have given him, as the son of his old age, the name David, "the Darling," or "Beloved." Of the mother of the future hero we know nothing beyond the fact that both she and Jesse were alive after the final rupture with Saul, and that as her husband is first met presiding at an act of religious worship, she is twice commemorated by her illustrious son as a "handmaid" of God.⁶ Little is known of the rest of the family; the name of the eldest brother alone reappearing in David's after life, as the head of the tribe of Judah; a dignity to which he had been appointed⁷ by his brother. The great difference in age between David and the rest of the household seems indeed to have well nigh excluded him from his proper footing in the home circle, if we may judge from their bearing towards him, as if he were

¹ Num. i. 7; ii. 3. Ruth iv. 20.

² The genealogy of Boaz was well known to the elders of the town. Ruth iv. 12.

³ 1 Sam xxii. 3.

⁴ From 2 Sam. xix. 37, 38, compared with Jer. xli. 17, David is seen to have granted possessions at Bethlehem to Chimham.

⁵ 1 Sam. xvii. 12.

⁶ Ps. lxxxvi. 16; cxvi. 16.

⁷ 1 Chron. xxvii. 18.

rather their attendant and servant than their equal.¹ Three sons of his sister² Zeruiah, afterwards the three leading heroes of his army—Abishai, Joab, and Asahel—who seem to have been older than himself, and Amasa, the son of his sister Abigail, who married an Arab,³ were part of the family group in its wider connections. Two sons of his brother Shimeah, Jonathan and Jonadab, are also mentioned; the former, afterwards a famous warrior;⁴ the latter, a shrewd, crafty, unprincipled man,⁵ used by David as an occasional adviser.⁶ Saul had been of the tribe of Benjamin, David was of that of Judah. This secured his safety during his wanderings in the hilly wilderness of the south, and led to his reign at Hebron till Jerusalem was conquered, though the tribe afterwards supported Absalom, in its jealousy at the loss of prestige when David had transferred the capital to Jerusalem.

The early youth of the future king was spent in the calling of a shepherd, the ancient occupation of his race. The uplands round Bethlehem on which he fed his flocks were then no less famous as pastures, as when a thousand years later shepherds heard on them the angelic announcement of the birth of our Lord. Fortunately his appearance in these years is recorded. Short of stature compared with his gigantic brother Eliab,⁷ he was strong and manly in figure, for he speaks of himself as being as swift as a gazelle, and so strong as to be able to break a bow of steel.⁸ The beauty of his eyes is especially mentioned, and his auburn hair, if indeed the last particular

¹ 1 Sam. xvii. 17, 28.

² Whether sister by birth or simply by the marriage of her mother with Jesse is not certain.

³ 1 Chron. ii. 17.

⁴ 2 Sam. xxi. 21.

⁵ 2 Sam. xiii. 5, 6.

⁶ 2 Sam. xiii. 32, 33.

⁷ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

⁸ Ps. xviii. 32-34.

do not refer to his ruddy complexion.¹ His ordinary dress was that of his humble calling; he wore a scrip or wallet slung round his neck, and carried a stick to drive off the dogs,² and a sling for defence against wild beasts, or to guide his flocks, by stones thrown in needed directions, as is still common among the shepherds of Palestine.³

But a genius like that of David could not confine itself to the lowly demands of tending sheep and goats. To the sensibility of a poetical temperament he united the glow of a fervent religious enthusiasm; and his communion day and night with nature, under the open sky, ministered to both. So bright an intelligence might in such circumstances have given itself, in some, to high speculation; with him, in keeping with the genius of his race, it found its joy in spiritual exercises and devotion. The teachings of home may have tinged his thoughts and given this bias, or he may have received it from frequent intercourse with bands of the sons of the prophets, wandering over the land; for we find him in later years on such friendly relations with these communities, that he sought refuge with them in their "dwellings" in Ramah, under Samuel, when afterwards in peril from Saul.⁴ From them also he would catch the impulse to cast his thoughts into poetical forms, and to accompany his songs or psalms with instrumental music, in which he became so proficient. It was in the solitudes of the hills that he trained himself to become "the sweet singer of Israel,"⁵ and invented the "instruments

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 11, 17, 42. *Dillmann*.

² 1 Sam. xvii. 40, 43.

³ Furrer, *Palästina*, p. 106.

⁴ 1 Sam. xix. 18, 19, 22, 23; xx. 1. In these verses the word Naioth is left untranslated.

⁵ 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

of music" long attributed to him.¹ Before he left the pastures it could be said of him, as it continued to be through life and for centuries after, that he sang songs with his whole heart, and loved Him that made them.² His sensitive nature must have caught inspiration from the scenery around him. The solitude of the hills, the wide landscapes near Bethlehem, looking down to the Dead Sea on the east, and over it to the purple mountains of Moab; a sea of heights rising far and near; the lonely uplands reaching away to the horizon on the south; the rich plains of the Philistine lands at his feet, to the west, and beyond them the deep blue of the Mediterranean, with its ships passing over the great waters, made a fitting school at once for his poetry and his religious fervour. To these happy years must be assigned that loving and reverent intimacy with nature which appears in so many Psalms. As he lay out with his flocks by night, the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars, which He had ordained, were ever shining over him in Syrian brightness. Morning by morning the sun, like a bridegroom from his chamber, came forth from the clouds over the Moabite hills. From time to time he would have to seek shelter from the storm, when "the God of glory thundered," and "His voice," in its long rolling peals, "shook the wilderness;" when the flames of the lightning leaped forth from the darkness, and the flood of "great waters" rushed down from the heavens.³ The 23rd Psalm, indeed, seems to owe its imagery to the incidents and scenery of this period. Jehovah was the Shepherd of the singer, as he himself was of the sheep and goats around him. The hollow of some grassy wady near would suggest the "green pastures," and the pools of rain left in the

¹ Amos vi. 5.² Ecclus. xlvii. 8.³ Ps. viii. 19, 23, 29

torrent bed in its depths, the "waters of rest" by which he was led and made to lie down. As he looked from the top of the hills down the dark wilderness gorges, sinking steep and terrible to the Dead Sea, "the valley of the shadow of death" would seem before him. The rod and the staff with which he guided and defended his flocks when they passed through such gloomy ravines, were the natural symbols of the care of Jehovah over himself in his darkest hours; and the simple feast spread in the shadow of a great rock would call up the thought of the constant goodness of his heavenly Father.¹

Nor could there have been a better school for the development of the manly virtues. The lion, which is mentioned about 130 times in Scripture, came up from the reed-beds and thickets of Jordan to the hill pastures of the Negeb,² and the hills of Judah, now so bare, were then, in part at least, covered with woods, from which the bear stole out to attack the sheepfolds. The shepherd, among other dangers, had to defend his charge from such enemies, though armed only with his sling and his staff; and he was often able to boast how he did so; taking from their very jaws the mangled remains of their victim.³ Such bravery had once and again been demanded from David. "Thy servant," said he to Saul, when pleading permission to go out against Goliath, "has been keeping his father's sheep. If a lion or a bear came and carried off one from the flock, I went out after him,

¹ See a passage in Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 43. Also Dillmann, art. *David*, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. i. p. 582.

² Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44.

³ Amos iii. 12. "Two legs or a piece of an ear." The Arabs in regions where the lion is still found are not afraid to attack him with their staves. *Thevenot* quoted by *Thenius*; and *Bochart* quoted by *Weiss*.

and beat him, and took the sheep from his jaws, and if he rose against me, I seized him by the beard and slew him.”¹ Nor would his courage be limited to such exploits, for in these troublous times every brave man was necessarily committed to the defence of his country against its Philistine invaders. Roused, it may be, by the presence of a garrison of “the uncircumcised” in Bethlehem itself,² he had already, while still a shepherd, gained a great name for his brave deeds³ among the rocks and strongholds of the Judæan hills which he knew so well.

The reputation thus widely spread may, humanly speaking, have first attracted the notice of Samuel to David; but he had no thought of him as the future king, when Divinely directed to go to Bethlehem to anoint a successor to Saul from the family of Jesse. He had grieved long and sincerely over the failure of him whom he had raised to power; but his rejection by God was now final, and the command to anoint another in his place could not be disobeyed. The jealous suspicion of Saul watched the prophet so closely that he could only venture to go to David’s town driving a heifer before him, as if his errand had been to sacrifice. His sudden appearance in the quiet hill-city was a great event, and filled its elders with alarm lest he might have come to denounce some sin that had been committed, or make known some impending judgment. Reassured by the intimation that he came peaceably, he was received with all honour. It was apparently on the day of a particular

¹ 1 Sam. xvii. 34-36. *Zunz*, so, also, *Thenius*.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 14.

³ Even among the body guard of Saul he is spoken of, while still a shepherd, as “a mighty valiant man,” and a “man of war.”

1 Sam. xvi. 18.

new moon, when the yearly sacrifice¹ was offered, followed by a feast, in which the heads of the community usually joined. Among the elders and chief men who had come to meet him were Jesse and his sons. These were forthwith directed to sanctify themselves, that is, to wash their whole persons and put on clean clothes,² "that they might rejoice with him"³ at the feast on the sacrifice he was about to offer: no others apparently being invited. One by one the sons were now summoned before him without either Jesse or they suspecting the object proposed. Nor had Samuel as yet any idea on whom the Divine choice had fallen. The manly beauty and lofty stature of Eliab, reminding him of Saul, made him fancy he must be the future king. But mere physical nobleness was no longer enough; the heart, not the outward appearance, was now, more than ever, essential. The seven sons passed by in succession, but a prophetic intimation warned him not to anoint any of them. They were therefore dismissed, and David brought from the hills, whence he came in his shepherd's dress. Him Samuel was directed at once to consecrate, and this he forthwith did with sacred oil, brought by himself in a horn from the Tabernacle at Nob. Even a single servant had been sent away before Saul was anointed, though no king then existed; and far greater caution was demanded now, when he was on the throne, madly jealous of any possible rival. Josephus, therefore, can hardly be wrong when he describes Samuel as taking David apart and whispering into his ear the meaning of his act⁴ as he performed it. The "prudence" for which the young man was even already noted might be trusted with the perilous secret,

¹ 1 Sam. xx. 6. For "a" sacrifice, read "the".

² Gen. xxxv. 2. Ex. xix. 10.

³ *Sept.*

⁴ Jos., *Ant.*, VI. viii. 1.

which neither his father nor his brethren seem to have suspected.¹ As in the case of Saul, however, the act had a supreme influence on the mind of David. In a moment it transformed him from a youth to a man. To use the words of the sacred narrative, from that time the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him.² But his Divine designation to the kingdom carried with it no disloyalty to Saul, who remained to David as in the past, the Anointed of God, sacred from all injury as such. He who had rejected him would in His own time raise his successor to the throne, but no unworthy thought or act would hasten the day. It was a secret of the soul, for which Saul should be in no way the worse. The anointing, in fact, only amounted to a private announcement to David of his ultimate destiny, that he might prepare himself for it, and be ready to act when the decisive moment arrived. Henceforth he left all to God, putting himself in His hands, to be led at His will. Yet a higher estimate of his own capabilities, must have dawned on him. Samuel's counsels became his rule of life and inner impulse. The serenity and resignation to God exhibited in his greatest perils hereafter were the results of the new spiritual force, caught from communion with the great prophet. To him, and no doubt also, in some measure, to the lessons of his father's house, he owed that deep and sincere trust in the Divine care and goodness which breathes through his life and supported him in his darkest trials.

The two incidents next recorded have appeared to many to involve a difficulty hard to explain; the one

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 17. The phrase "in the midst of his brethren," may as correctly be translated "from among his brethren." Weiss, *David und seine Zeit*, p. 9

² 1 Sam. xvi. 13.

assigning David's introduction to Saul to his skill in music, the other to his victory over Goliath. The order of events, it has been thought, has not been strictly retained; the second incident coming, properly, first. The young shepherd's appointment as harper to Saul is supposed to have been introduced first, to impress the mind with the beneficent influence of the Spirit of God in contrast to that of the evil spirit by which Saul was possessed, as stated in the verse immediately preceding.¹ The sacred writers, we are reminded, do not always closely adhere to chronological order,² but rather, like Herodotus, group their facts so as most effectively to bring out the lessons they are designed to convey.³ Here, it is said, the conflict with Goliath is put first; then a passing introduction of David to Saul assumed; his summons to Gibeah to soothe the king's madness by his harp following later, and being repeated till he finally remains at court altogether, is made one of the armour-bearers, and sent out on forays against the Philistines. His repeated victories however, and the praise which they bring, in the end excite Saul's jealousy, and kindle a burning hatred in place of the love he had hitherto felt for him. Others⁴ retain the order as it stands, explaining Saul's question, "Whose son art thou?"—after the death of Goliath—as an inquiry as to David's connection and family rather than respecting himself. Him he had known and loved in past times as his harper and sweet singer, but his family had not hitherto come into such notice as was now merited by his public services and fame. As the narrative stands, the attacks

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 14, 15.

² This is seen also in the New Testament.

³ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 416, note 8.

⁴ *David und seine Zeit.* Dr. Hugo Weiss, 1880, p. 57.

of Saul's madness are seen to be constantly more frequent and more severe. At last the possible effect of music on his diseased mind is suggested by some one—tradition says, Doeg, the Edomite—and David is named to the sufferer as famed, not only for his skill with the harp, but for his valour, his marvellous gift of speech,¹ and manly beauty. Forthwith he is summoned, with that unquestioning claim to the service of any one, which is peculiar to Eastern kings. He was still herding his father's sheep, but started at once for Gibeah, which was only a few hours' distant, taking with him—as the gift which he, like all others, must have on approaching the king—the modest present of some bread, a skin of wine, and a kid. Personally winning, his natural loveableness soon found its way to the heart of Saul; and his music, it may be accompanying the words of his own noble religious poetry, speedily made him indispensable to the stricken intellect it so gently soothed.² The evil spirit that troubled him was “from God,” and it was fitting that it should be overcome by the holier influence of that gracious Spirit which had come so mightily on David.

Despite his secret misery, Saul had still a busy public life. The Philistines could not endure his having

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 18. “Prudence”=wisdom of speech (LXX.)=eloquence (Heb.).

² In the narrative of the Survey of the Coast of South Eastern Africa, by Captain Owen, there is an account, very similar to that in the story of Saul, of the power of the music of a flute in calming madness. Captain Owen was unhappily seized with mental disease, but it was only necessary to play to him the tunes he loved, and the paroxysms at once abated. Kitto mentions the case of Philip V. of Spain, who was cured of a fixed melancholy by the music of a famous player. *Daily Bib. Illust.*, vol. iii. p. 234.

deprived them of their supremacy over Israel, and often made raids into the hills, since they could not for the time undertake their reconquest. The full grain pits were plundered after the harvest, the vineyards stripped, and men, women and children carried off into slavery from the Hebrew towns and villages. Time after time these inroads had to be repelled, but Saul could not venture on an attempt at a counter-invasion of a people still so powerful. At last the enemy had gained sufficient confidence to make a special effort to recover their old footing. Marching across the rolling plain at the foot of the hills, they ascended the broad Wady Sunt, the Wady of the Terebinth, then known as the valley of Elah,—between the towns of Shochoh, “the bushy,” and Azekah, “the newly tilled,”—one of the many ravines worn out in the course of ages by winter torrents, rushing from the uplands of Judah to the lower level of the coast plain. Coming up by this hollow, as through an open gate, into the hill country, the Philistine host, in great numbers, had pitched their camp at a spot known as Ephes-dammim, “the staying of bloodshed,” a name given, doubtless, from the closing of some ancient feud.¹ The wady is, as nearly as possible, three miles long, and is broad and open; a deep trench with perpendicular sides, the bed of the winter torrents, winding hither and thither down its centre, impassable except at some spots, and forming a natural barrier between forces drawn up on the opposite sides of the valley. The ridges of hills on each side run nearly east and west, rising from 700 to 800 feet above the central trough; that on the north throwing out five bastions or spurs; the southern, more continuous heights, being broken only by a bifurcated

¹ The modern Beit Fased, “the House of Bleeding,” near Shochoh, seems to retain a trace of the name.

recess. Marching out instantly with his standing host of 3,000 men, and such additions as might be available by a hurried levy, Saul stood at bay on the low rocky hills of the northern side of the ravine, face to face with the enemy on those of the southern slope. Between them lay clumps of bushes, and a wide expanse of ripening barley, cut in two by the red banks fringing the white shingly bed¹ of the torrent. The distance between the two ridges is about a mile, but the spurs on the north side run out nearly to the middle of the wady, which is here only about 400 or 500 yards wide at the bottom. Behind Saul's camp, closing in the view, rose the blue hill-walls of Judah. The heights behind the Philistines shut out the opposite view of the country, sinking ridge after ridge to the sea-coast plains. Judah had been invaded by the Terebinth Wady because the road from Gaza and Ekron to Jebus ran through it; the only road into the mountains in that district.²

It was at that time a custom in those parts, as elsewhere in antiquity³—reminding us of De Bohun at Bannockburn, or of the Norman Taille-fer at Senlac—for a champion to come forward from the ranks of either army, and challenge any one of the opposite force. In the days of Saul, at least, the result of such a duel was regarded as a Divine judgment against one side or the other, and often saved much blood. This usage the Philistines now followed, choosing for their hero a gigantic warrior of

¹ Conder's *Tent Work*, p. 249.

² See Kiepert's *Large Map*. Conder speaks of the hosts lying north and south from each other, but on Kiepert's map Shochoh and Azekah lie east and west from each other, with a stream-bed running north in the intervening wady. Doubtless Conder, as the later authority, is correct.

³ *Iliad*, iii. 340 ff., Paris and Menelaos; vii. 206, Ajax and Hector. *Livy*, i. 23, the Horatii and Curiatii.

Gath, named Goliath,¹ he of "the shining armour,"² as he might well be called, for he strode forth in helmet, jerkin and greaves, of bright copper mail, rendered still more imposing by his great bulk³ and huge weapons—a copper-headed lance at his back, a mighty spear, iron-headed, in his hand, and a sword worthy of him girt at his side.⁴

He was one of the last of the old gigantic race of the Anakim, which Israel had overcome at the time of the conquest,⁵ and round whom hung a superstitious terror.

¹ In 2 Sam. xxi. 19, it is said that "Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath," but in 1 Chron. xx. 5, it is said that Elhanan, son of Jair, slew *Lahmi*, the brother of Goliath. The latter is apparently correct; a word having been omitted by the transcriber from the former. See *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Elhanan*. Also *Graetz*, p. 1, note 9. *Weiss*, p. 53.

² The derivation by which Goliath is assumed to mean an "exile," is abandoned by Mühlau and Volek.

³ Our version says, Goliath was six cubits and a span high. Taking Lieut. Conder's estimate of a cubit (16 inches) so strikingly corroborated (*Tent Work*, p. 188), this would make him about 8 feet 9 inches high. Josephus and the Sept., however, read 4 cubits and a span, which at the ordinary estimate of 21 inches to a cubit would make him about 7 feet 9 inches high. Taking the cubit at 16 inches, it would make him 6 feet 3 inches; but his huge helmet, likely surmounted by a plume of feathers, would add to his apparent height.

⁴ "Coat of mail" = corslet of scales, made of overlapping plates of metal, perhaps fixed on cloth, and reaching almost to the knees. "5000 *shekels*" = about 157 lbs. avoirdupois. The "target," was a javelin slung between his shoulders. The spear weighed nearly 19 lbs. The shield carried before him was large enough to cover him, crouching. "The Philistines shaved off the beard and whiskers. Their helmet was like a row of feathers set on a band of metal, to which were attached scales of the same material for the defence of the back of the neck." *Osburn*.

⁵ Josh. xi. 22. Jer. xlvii. 5; where "for remnant of their valley," read "remnant of the Anakim."

His brother Lahmi was equally huge, and bore a spear as massive, and, besides him, three others of the stock lived at Gath; one, with an extra finger and toe on each hand and foot; a second, Ishbi-benob,¹ whose armour vied in weight with that of Goliath; and a third, Sippai, whose enormous height and size were the wonder of all.²

Such champions, in their public challenges, were wont to curse and ridicule, in the bitterest words, the foe, their race, and their gods; to force acceptance of the defiance thus insolently given. The soldiers were cowards; the people slaves; the gods had no power.³ This, Goliath had done for forty days, proclaiming himself also, according to the Chaldee Targum, as the slayer of the sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas—and the hero of the capture

¹ "My dwelling is in Nob;" alluding apparently to the district from which his family had originally been driven.

² 2 Sam. xxi. 15-22. 1 Chron. xx. 5.

³ Burckhardt (*Notes on the Bedouins*, p. 174) says, that such defiances by single combatants are still usual in their wars. So in the old poem of Antar, heroes come forward and challenge the army of the foe to meet him. One defiance runs as follows:—"O my mother, sleep, be satisfied and rejoice; this day will I relieve my thirst with Antar. When thou seest the birds mangle his carcase under the dust, then extol and thank me. The slave! This day I will leave him on the face of the earth, where he shall lie dead on the barren waste. I will make him take thrusts with my spear-head, and I will smite him with my bright and unfailing scimeter. I will leave the beasts to run at him, and prowl round him in the dark night. I will wipe out my shame with the sword and spear, and wreak vengeance on the black slave!" Antar returns all this insult and abuse with wonderful fierceness and copiousness of vituperation. Roberts tells us that it is still usual in India to insult an enemy for the purpose of provoking a fight. "Begone, or I will give thy flesh to the jackals." "The crows shall soon have thy carcase." "The teeth of the dogs shall soon have hold of thee." "The vultures are ready." *Oriental Illustrations*.

of the sacred Ark.¹ But no taunts, however bitter, could rouse any of the Hebrews to venture his life with so dreaded an adversary. He might call them slaves of Saul, but no one would peril the fate of the nation, as he proposed, on a conflict with him. Saul and his bravest followers, in the apparent absence of Jonathan, listened in silent dismay. In vain had the most lavish promises been held out, to stimulate some hero to the encounter. He who slew such a foe would be loaded with riches, freed from taxes and military service, and would have a princess for wife. But no one stirred.

At this moment David arrived in the camp, sent by his father with food for his brothers,² who were serving with the king. But his heart was with his countrymen in their necessity, and he had eagerly seized the opportunity to come down from Bethlehem, 14 miles to the east, that he might see the battle, for he chafed at his detention on the pastures while others were in the field against the Philistines. Leaving the provisions in charge of the keeper of the baggage, which served for a rude defence round the Hebrew camp,³ as is still usual among the Arabs, he hurried to the front, urged by the loud war cry of the host, raised on the instant. Since his visit to Saul, to soothe his madness by harp and song, he had returned to his old shepherd life; for the charm had worked wonders, and the king's illness

¹ *Targum* on 1 Sam. iv. 11.

² Some parched corn, ten loaves, and ten cheeses. For "Take their pledge," the *Sept.* has "learn what they need." The Arabs have no cheeses, in our sense, but they dry coagulated butter-milk till it is quite hard. It is then ground and eaten mixed with butter. Burckhardt, *Notes*, etc., vol. i. p. 60.

³ 1 Sam. xvii. 20; xxvi. 7; A. V. "trench." Like the South African "laager."

seemed to have finally left him, so that the music was no longer needed.

Meanwhile Goliath once more stalked out defiantly from the ranks of the enemy, and repeated his daily challenge, to the dismay of the Hebrews. David had heard the rewards promised for slaying him, and at once proposed to accept the wager of battle. Stung at the boldness which seemed to reflect on others, he was met with scoffs and derision from Eliab, his eldest brother; but nothing could turn him. At last, the offer, repeated from man to man, reached the ears of Saul. To dissuade the stripling was vain; no inequality of the fight affected him. The old hero spirit of Gideon, which looked with unfaltering trust to God to give victory in His own cause, however weak the instrument, filled him with dauntless confidence. Jehovah had delivered him from lions and bears, and could deliver him out of the hand of this Philistine.¹ The honour of God was at issue. The fight was to be sought that it might show Who reigned in Israel. All the army would know that Jehovah saved not with sword and spear, for victory comes from Him alone! Never Puritan went into battle with a loftier inspiration. It was a touch of the same spirit that Cromwell caught when he chose "the Lord of Hosts," for his battle cry at Dunbar, and greeted the rout of his foe with the words of the Psalm, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered."² Unable to deter him, and carried away by his grand enthusiasm; remembering also, perhaps, the name he had already won for great deeds of valour,³ Saul at last permitted him to undertake

¹ Antar, in the heroic poem, boasts in the same way of having killed a wolf that had attacked his flocks. The staff was his only weapon, he tells us, and he was but ten years old.

² Ps. lxxviii. 1.

³ 1 Sam. xvi. 18.

the terrible risk. Would he not, however, put on the king's armour,¹ and his helmet and sword? But "he is not used to them, they are too heavy for him;"² he will rather go as he is." Out then, he passes, to the open hill slope, in his shepherd's tunic; his rude wallet by his side; a shepherd's staff and a goat's hair sling in his hand. Rash as he seemed, it was only in appearance. Like a Benjamite, he could hurl a stone to a hairbreadth and never miss.³ Long practice on the hills, where his sling was in constant use in driving or guiding his flocks, had made him perfect in its use. His youth and slight figure filled his gigantic adversary with unmeasured rage, as an unprecedented insult. A warrior like him to be defied in his panoply by a youth with a shepherd's staff! He had crossed the torrent-bed in the middle of the ravine, and come up⁴ the slope held by the Israelites, to beard them to their faces, but was on his way back, and had re-crossed when arrested by the shout that greeted David's advance. The young champion could thus reach the shingly bottom of the dry channel, in which he was presently lost for the moment, as he descended its steep side to gather some of the pebbles with which it was thickly strewn. But he soon re-appeared on the farther side, flinging taunts at Goliath as withering as the Philistine had hurled at the Hebrews. Roused to fury by this, the huge man turned on his foe, who on his part now ran forward, that he might sling a stone with the greater force, full at him. The first shot sufficed. Striking

¹ 1 Sam. xvii. 38. Armour = war dress. The *Sept.* omits the words, "Also he armed him with a coat of mail."

² 1 Sam. xvii. 39. That he could wear Saul's armour shows that he must have been full grown—perhaps about twenty. *Fitzpatrick.*

³ Jud. xx. 16.

⁴ 1 Sam. xvii. 23-25.

with terrible force on his forehead, it stunned him instantly, so that he fell to the ground, where he was the next moment bestridden by David, and beheaded with his own sword, while still insensible. Accepting the evil omen, so unexpected, the Philistines forthwith fled, pursued by Saul's host, who followed them with fierce slaughter beyond Ekron, and even within the gates of Gath,¹ nearly 25 miles,² mostly down-hill. The head, the sword, and the armour of the giant remained as the trophies of David; the spoils of the tents fell to Saul and his force.

The killing of Goliath was a turning point in the history of David. From the battle field he returned for a time to his father's house, apparently, however, after a visit to Jerusalem, which, though still held by the Jebusites, was largely inhabited by Hebrews.³ In the care of some of his friends among these, he left, for the present, the grisly memorial of his victory—the head of the fallen man;⁴ his thoughts, perhaps, looking forward even then to a day when the city, won for a capital to his people, would be the fittest resting-place for such a token of the triumph of God over the blasphemer. The huge armour he kept, meanwhile, “in his” own “tent” in the hills, and the sword was laid up in his father's house till it could be transferred to the Tabernacle at Nob, as an offering of grateful thanks to Jehovah. Before leaving the camp he had been led to Saul by Abner,⁵ and the king had held a lengthened conversation with him, respecting himself and his family. The results of this in the end were momentous. Henceforth, after a brief interval, David took his place permanently in

¹ 1 Sam. xvii. 52. *Sept.*

² Kiepert's *Large Map*.

³ Josh. xv. 63.

⁴ 1 Sam. xvii. 54.

⁵ 1 Sam. xvii. 57.

attendance on Saul. It was now, also, that he first met Jonathan, over whose chivalrous and noble nature his bearing and great deed made a permanent conquest. Jealousy had no place in that princely heart. Open, unselfish and tender, he loved the young hero with a love greater than that felt for a woman.¹ Taking off his own war cloak, he put it on him, and insisted on arming him, also, with his sword and bow, and clasp- ing round him his costly girdle.² Not content even with this, he proposed a covenant of abiding friendship, to extend to their children. Nor was Jonathan alone in his enthusiasm. All Israel, and especially Judah, to which he belonged, was drawn to one so brave. His name passed from lip to lip over the land, as the pride of the nation.

Returning soon after to Gibeah, he was appointed ere long to the command of the body guard of the king³ and permanently exchanged the lute and the shepherd's staff for the sword. Appointed to a post in Saul's standing force, and sent out from time to time on raids against the enemy, his genius for war and his valour were ever more conspicuous. As yet he daily grew in Saul's favour.⁴ He had entered the path to fame and fortune. Not only the people, but even the body guard

¹ 2 Sam. i. 26, *lit.*

² That an Eastern prince should give any ornament or robe from his own person is a mark of favour shown only very rarely. In Esther, Mordecai is to be clothed with the robe "which the king useth to wear." The Persian ambassador signed the treaty between his country and Russia in 1831, as The Lord of the Dagger set in jewels, of the Sword adorned with gems, and of the Shawl-coat already worn by the king," these having been royal gifts to him from the king's person Morier's *Second Journey*, p. 299.

³ 1 Sam. xviii. 5. Men of war=royal guard.

⁴ 1 Sam. xviii. 5, 14. *Sept.* and *Targ.*

of the king¹ were loud in his praises ; and in the household of Saul, himself, the princess Michal favoured him,² to the great satisfaction of her father, for as yet he had not thought of regarding him as a rival. Before long he was honoured by being allowed to dine at the royal table each new moon, in company with Jonathan, the crown prince, and Abner, the head of the army.³ But this happy state of things was not to last.

On one occasion, when David and his men were returning from a more than usually successful foray against the Philistines⁴ the people crowded to greet them in the various towns and villages through which they had to pass ; the women and maidens—doubtless in holiday attire—singing the praises of their favourite as they danced before the advancing column, to the music of tambourines and cymbals. Unfortunately, the popularity of David made him foremost in these improvisations. “Saul,” they sang, “has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands.” Word of this soon reached Saul, and at once roused his jealousy. The rival who had hitherto been only a vague terror, was before him. He whom he had favoured, was the darling of the people, the man chosen of God to supplant him, as better than himself. His whole nature was shaken by the discovery. “They ascribe only thousands to me,” said he, “but tens of thousands to him. They put him above me. What can he have more but the kingdom?” The words of

¹ 1 Sam. xviii. 5. “Behaved himself wisely” = “prospered.”

² 1 Sam. xviii. 20 ; verses 1 to 5, 9–11, 17–19, and 21 are omitted in the *Sept.*

³ 1 Sam. xx. 25. Jonathan sat opposite Saul ; Abner and David, apparently, one at each side. The word “arose” should be rather “in front of.” See Jos., *Ant.*, VI. xi. 9.

⁴ 1 Sam. xviii. 6. “Philistines,” not “Philistine.” *Graetz.*

Samuel, "Rejected of God," rang in his ears. All the love he had felt for the young hero turned on the moment into hate, which rose to the pitch of madness.

This changed feeling showed itself speedily. On the day after David's return to Gibeah, a sudden fit of frenzy seized the king, and the charm of the youth's lyre was once more brought into requisition to calm him. But it had now lost its power, and only roused him to fury. Grasping his spear, always near him¹ as the sign of his royalty—like the battle axe, the whip, and the crooked stick of the Egyptian kings,² or the sword and bow of the kings of Assyria,³—he hurled it twice at the player, who, however, skilfully avoided it. That he should have twice missed, seemed to Saul a proof that God protected his enemy, and deepened the hatred he bore him. To David, however, the incident appeared only a result of passing madness, and he still remained at court. Soon, however, his destruction was sought by cunning plots; the king not daring to attack him openly, for fear of the people. Pretending to regret his violence, he promoted him to be the head of 1,000 of his standing force, and betrothed to him Merab, his elder daughter, in marriage, in fulfilment of the promise made before the fight with Goliath. But he coupled the honour with the crafty suggestion that to win her finally he must be more valiant than ever against the Philistines; his secret desire being to spur him to efforts in which he would perish. David, however, hesitated, at least as yet, to accept an alliance with the family of the king; and meanwhile⁴ Saul showed his insincerity by marrying

¹ 1 Sam. xix. 10; xx. 33; xxii. 6; xxvi. 7.

² Weiss, *Weltgeschichte*, 2 Aufl. vol. i. p. 205.

³ Layard's *Nineveh*, p. 355.

⁴ 1 Sam. xviii. 19.

Merab,—David's betrothed, and therefore by Jewish law virtually his wife,—to Adriel, the son of Barzillai, a wealthy sheik of Meholah, on the east of the Jordan.¹ She had, indeed, been apparently affianced to Adriel before being given to David; Saul thinking, no doubt that Adriel would resent the loss of his wife, and revenge himself on the man who had taken her from him.² This plot having failed, a second was planned. Michal, a younger daughter of Saul, had long been in love with the conqueror of Goliath, and the courtiers and the king caused it to be whispered that he might possibly have her. His objection that he could not provide the gift needed for such a match was overruled, by the proposal to cancel it by his slaying a hundred Philistines; the hope being that the risk might get him out of the way. But such a price he was only too ready to pay, and Saul had presently to give him Michal as wife. David had now made his first great marriage, and had reached the very foot of the throne; even the plots of Saul turning out to his advantage.³

Despairing at last to get rid of his "enemy" by secret schemes, Saul proceeded to open violence. Taking Jonathan and his own body guard into his counsel, he openly stated his wish that they should kill him. But "the soul of Jonathan was knit" with that of the

¹ A betrothed woman was regarded as belonging to her wooer. In fact she was legally treated as a married woman, and could not be separated from her intended husband except by a bill of divorce. Dr. Ginsburg, art. *Marriage*, in Kitto's *Cyclo*.

² 1 Sam. xviii. 19.

³ 1 Sam. xviii. 27. The Heb. says that David killed 200 Philistines; the *Sept.* reads 200. Josephus says 600. *Ant.*, VI. x. 3. Ewald thinks David had to go out against the enemy with such following as he could get, not with his body of Saul's troops. *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 529.

threatened man, and he loved him as he did his own life.¹ Pleading the cause of his friend, he won Saul over to promise that he should not be injured, and David, on this assurance, returned to the king's presence as if nothing had happened.

Yet this quiet was short. Fresh forays against the Philistines gave David still greater fame, and increased his influence more than ever. This added new fuel to Saul's jealousy, and brought on a fresh paroxysm of mad fury, in which he hurled his spear again at him with such force that it stuck in the wall. It was now time to think of escape. His house was on the town wall, and to it in the first place he fled. But news presently reached him through Michal that it was beset, by Saul's orders, and that he must instantly flee. Letting him down through a window therefore, outside the wall, his wife had the satisfaction of once more seeing him safe for the time. But her ingenuity did not end here. Like the wife of Lavalette in the last generation, she pretended that her husband was sick, to delay the executioners sent by her father. Taking "the teraphim," a kind of household genius, or we might almost say idol, cherished by the Hebrews from the days of their crossing the Euphrates, she laid it on David's bed, covering the head with a mosquito net of goats' hair,² and made them believe it was he. Meanwhile David had fled to the settlement of the prophets, at Ramah, near by, where the presence of Samuel, and his high place and altar, seemed to promise safety. But Saul was too desperate to respect even a sanctuary. Messengers sent by him

¹ 1 Sam. xviii. 1. 2 Sam. i. 26.

² So *Weiss* and *Ewald*. Graetz thinks it was laid with a goats' hair pillow below the head and a cloth over it; but the former meaning seems the better.

hurried to Ramah as soon as David was known to be there. The singing and music of the chorus of prophets, however, and the sight of Samuel at their head, affected them so that they returned to the king without fulfilling their errand. A second and a third band fared no better; the high enthusiasm of the sacred music and song, and the whole spirit of the place, touched them also. At last, Saul himself determined to head a fourth band; but the sights and sounds of a spot so venerable had the same effect on him as on others. Seized by a fit of prophetic excitement, he too joined in the hymns and psalms of the prophet choir, till, like a modern dervish, he rose to such a frenzy that he tore off his mantle¹ and fell down in a state of stupor which lasted a day and a night. The scene must have been strange even then, for a saying rose from it: "Saul also is among the prophets!"

The clustered huts² of the prophets were not, however, to be the permanent home of David. It was clear that his life was not safe even there. But all hopes of a reconciliation with Saul had not yet passed away. The king had returned to Gibeah in a quieter mood, that seemed to hold out some faint hope of his being more placable. Making his way, therefore, secretly to Jonathan, David arranged with him to find out, once for all,

¹ The word "naked" is not to be taken literally, but as meaning that he threw off, in his ecstasy, his royal mantle. Nehemiah commanded the Jews on the wall to keep their arms by them that the enemy might not find them *naked*. Isaiah walked *naked* and barefoot. David danced *naked* before the Ark. The word does not in such cases mean any more than a figurative expression. To be without an outer robe was to be *naked* in the idea of such passages as the incident of Saul. The light-armed Greek soldiers were called *gūmnētes*, or *naked* soldiers.

² This is strictly the meaning of Naioth.

whether he could return to Gibeah or would have to seek safety at a distance. The meeting was full of pathos. Jonathan would take advantage of his father's love to him and of the fact that there was no secret between them, to find out if he really meant harm to David. Meanwhile, with a presentiment of his friend's future greatness, and an absolute oblivion of self, he pledged him by the most binding sanctions to be kind for ever to himself and his children. "Mayest thou, if I still live," says he, "mayest thou show me the kindness of the Lord; and, if I die, cut not off thy kindness from my house for ever. And when the Lord cutteth off the enemies of David, every one, from the face of the earth, let not the name of Jonathan be cut off from the house of David, but let the Lord require it at the hand of David's enemies." ¹

But every hope was speedily dashed. David's absence from the king's table at the first day of the new moon passed without remark from Saul, but an apology for it from Jonathan on the second kindled his fury. Accusing his son of treachery, he added, in his rage, the most insulting language against his son's mother; stooping in his rage, to curse not only him, but her, in the coarsest terms—for Orientals when carried away by passion always vilify the relatives of those at whom they are incensed.² He must send and fetch David, "for he shall surely die." A respectful remonstrance only showed the depth of the king's hatred, for it was answered by his hurling his javelin at the speaker. Rising from table in fierce anger,

¹ 1 Sam. xx. 14, 15. *Sept.* Jonathan seems to dread David's forgetting even so sacred a covenant. "May Jehovah execute judgment on David by the hand of his enemies, if he forget this covenant," is in effect its close.

² Rosenmüller's *Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 107.

Jonathan forthwith hurried to the cairn Ezel, where it had been arranged that David should await his return. There, under pretence of enjoying archery, he announced the dark result to his friend, and the two separated, amid tender weeping farewells.¹ David now felt himself virtually outlawed. He knew that Saul would hunt for his life, but whither should he turn? No part of the land of Israel was safe, and he therefore resolved to flee to his greatest enemy, Achish, the Philistine king of Gath, who, he believed, would be glad to welcome him, and thus disarm the most renowned of his foes. But he had neither food for the journey, nor arms, and above all he needed counsel from God, through the Urim and Thummim. He bent his steps, therefore, secretly, to Nob, on the main north road, apparently in sight of Jerusalem,² the only sanctuary left after the Ark had been carried off, and the site of the Tabernacle since its rescue from the flames of Shiloh. There, amidst a small colony of priests and their families, lived the high priest Ahimelech,—a grandson of Eli and apparently brother of the Ahijah whom Saul kept near him for consultation. To him he applied for Divine counsels. The sight of Saul's son-in-law, however, seemed to threaten danger, and a ready story was needed before he could get what he required. At last, the famished and unarmed fugitive obtained five loaves of the shewbread of the preceding week, which had been withdrawn from the holy place, as the Law ordered, but had not yet been

¹ In 1 Sam. xx. 40, the word "artillery" is used. It is from the Latin *ars*, used in late Latin for "an implement." Hence the Low Latin, *artillaria*; Old French, *artillerie*, "machines or equipments of war." The word was used for missile weapons long before the invention of gunpowder. *Bible Word Book*, p. 37.

² Isa. x. 32.

eaten by the priests.¹ He got also the sword of Goliath, which had been finally laid up as a trophy behind the veil² in the Tabernacle. Unfortunately for himself, however, Ahimelech further consulted the Urim and Thummim on his behalf—a high-priestly act reserved, apparently, for the king alone, and hence easily strained into a charge of treason, when performed, however innocently, for one now so hated and feared as David.³ But, meanwhile, a face of evil omen had appeared for a moment—that of Doeg, the Edomite chief of Saul's stables, who had first brought David to court, but had no love for him or for Israel. He had apparently been sent to the Tabernacle to be under inspection for some real or suspected uncleanness.⁴

¹ *Studien und Kritiken*, 1841, p. 993.

² *Ibid.*, 1831, p. 308.

³ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 205.

⁴ Weiss fancies it was from appearances which had been thought those of leprosy. Lev. xiii. 4.





CHAPTER VII.

DAVID AN OUTLAW.

ANXIOUS to secure a friendly reception, as now, seemingly, hostile to Saul, David had very possibly held communication with Achish.¹ Or it may be he trusted to a feigned name, and the change in his appearance by lapse of years, for disguise, forgetful that the sword of Goliath would at once betray him. But his welcome was of the roughest; for though Achish himself was well disposed, his attendants, on his name becoming known, distrusted one who was in effect so powerful in Israel, and had been greeted by the women after his battles as having slain his tens of thousands of Philistines, while Saul had only slain his thousands. David was, therefore, in imminent peril,² and had to save his life by craft. Feigning himself insane, he acted like a madman; beat on the town gates as on a tabret or drum, let his spittle fall on his beard,³ and foamed at the mouth. No one would touch a demented man, for insanity was held

¹ Achish or Abimelech seems to have been the hereditary title of the Philistine kings. Title of Ps. xxxiv. Gen. xx. 2; xxvi. 1.

² The title of Ps. lvi. says he was actually imprisoned.

³ To let one's beard be defiled was possible, in Eastern opinion, only in a madman. It is so respected that any slight to it, like this, is inconceivable in a sane man.

in antiquity, as it still is in the East, in some way, a divine possession. He was therefore free to escape, and speedily did so. Prophet and priest had equally failed to protect him in his own land, and now he had to flee from Philistia. Nothing remained but that he should maintain himself as he best could in the wild hilly districts of Judah which he knew so well. Fortunately a secure retreat was near at hand. About two and a half miles south of Shochoh, in the great Wady of the Terebinth, where he had slain Goliath, there is a rounded hill about 500 feet high, almost isolated by valleys, and covered with ruins, showing it to have once been a natural fortress strengthened by art. A well at its foot supplies water at all times, and near it are other ruins to which still clings the name of Aid el Ma—words identical in pronunciation with the Adullam of the Bible. To this spot David fled, seeking refuge in a cave known by that name. The sides of the lateral valley are, indeed, lined throughout with small caverns, which are still used for dwellings and folds, and there is, on the hill itself, a separate cave, low and blackened by smoke, in which a family now makes its home.¹ It may well be that this is the identical spot in which David hid. Here he had to begin the life of an outlaw, supporting himself as he best could by forays on the neighbouring Philistine districts, or by requisitions on the local population, as payment for his protecting them. His place of retreat was presently known to many, and his fame soon gathered around him not a few, led to him by various motives. Discontent with the arbitrary rule of Saul; indignation at his treatment of the popular hero; the troubles of the time; the fear of creditors; the spirit of adventure; eagerness for the excitement of

¹ Conder's *Tent Work*, p. 278.

war with the Philistines, all swelled the number of his adherents, till they formed a strong band, proud of his leadership. His aged parents, also, afraid of the vengeance of Saul, soon made their way to him from Bethlehem, and threw themselves on his care. The numerous caves around, and the natural stronghold on the top of the hill, offered ample accommodation.¹ Before long, he was further joined by his nephews, the sons of Zeruah, now perhaps for the first time closely associated with him—Joab, Abishai, and Asahel: men with fiery souls, who were hereafter to become heroes, under his training. Even from the remnant of the Canaanites some threw in their lot with him, for among his most valiant followers we find the names of Zelek the Ammonite, Uriah the Hittite, and Ithmah the Moabite;² representatives, probably, of many others of the old races. Every part of the land, indeed, contributed some daring spirits, and out of the whole David was able to form a band of heroes hereafter to be the glory of his reign. One trait of this time, still preserved, lights up the darkness by a touch of pure human interest. Living almost within sight of his native village, David had one day expressed a longing for a draught of the water of a cistern near its gate.³ He had doubtless often drunk from it in childhood, and this invested it with romantic worth.⁴ Yet he had no thought of really obtaining it,

¹ 1 Sam. xxii. 4.

² 1 Chron. xi. 39, 41, 46.

³ In the East, where water is the principal drink, great stress is laid on the taste of particular wells or springs. A steamer, regularly plies between Constantinople and an island in the Sea of Marmora, to supply the Sultan's palace with the water of a famous spring. There are shops in Constantinople where nothing but water is sold, the price of a draught varying with the fame of the spring from which it has been brought.—*Van Lennep*.

⁴ The only spot which can now be connected with this famous

for the Philistines had a post at the time in Bethlehem, and their camp was pitched in the Valley of the Giants, close at hand. It was the harvest time,¹ which began with the barley reaping, in April, and the enemy had come up, as usual, to carry off the rich crops for which the valley was proverbial.² To get at the well it would be necessary to break through their host; an act of daring which seemed too rash to be undertaken. Three of the "mighty men" round David, however, having heard his words, braved all danger, and actually drew and brought to him the water he had desired. But he could not taste what had been bought at such peril, and "poured it out unto the Lord," as Alexander poured out in libation the helmet full of water brought him in the desert of Gedrosia; unwilling to drink when his army was dying of thirst.

Amidst the wild and rough companions of these first days of his outlawry, David still retained in a striking degree the lofty religious enthusiasm of his youth, and must have longed for some kindred spirit with which his own could have fellowship. This also, he early found, in the arrival of the future "king's seer," Gad; perhaps from the community of sons of the prophets at Ramah. He could now obtain inspired direction, and enjoy communion on the sacred interests dear to both. That he should have retained his religious sensibility so undisturbed amidst a life apparently so unfavourable to a

well is a cistern, carefully built, about twenty feet deep, generally dry—about fifteen minutes north-west from the present Bethlehem. *Schenkel and Riehm. Furrer, Palästina*, p. 181.

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 13. The words "in the harvest-time," are, however, rendered by Graetz, "to the hold;" by Ewald, Thenius and Wellhausen, "to the rock."

² Isa. xvii. 5.

religious frame, is, indeed, one of his special characteristics. It was no mere superficial sentiment, but the rooted passion of his soul, and to its absolute sincerity we owe all that has made his Psalms the consolation of every age, and the supreme utterance of true religious experience. The genuine expression of a gifted soul, touched by the Spirit of God—in laying bare the secrets of a single heart they have embodied the experience of all, in every varied trial and vicissitude of life. His whole career is illustrated by sacred memorials of his spiritual hopes, fears, consolations, and penitent confessions; all alike stamped with an intense reality which bares his inmost thoughts before us.

But David's Psalms have also a surpassing interest in connection with the successive periods and incidents of his life; nor can we realize the man unless we thus associate with the historical outline of his story the self-disclosures of his inner life.

The 6th, 7th, and 11th Psalms have been attributed¹ to the time when he was with Samuel and the prophets at Ramah, on his first fleeing from Saul. Read in this light, their words have a wonderful pathos and grandeur. His "rebuke" and "chastening" are from Jehovah, but his prayer will be received. Lowly humility, as of one justly smitten for his sins, is mingled with absolute trust in the Divine mercy. His greatest trials are borne meekly in the assurance that they are designed by a gracious Providence for his highest good. Thus, in the 11th Psalm we hear him singing :

"In Jehovah put I my trust: how say ye to my soul—
'Fly to your mountain, O bird!'—
'For, see, the wicked bend their bows,'—

¹ *Ewald.*

‘They make ready their arrow on the string,’—

‘To shoot secretly at the upright in heart,’—

When the foundations (of order and security) are **overthrown**
What can the righteous do?”

His position seemed hopeless to not a few, but his spirit is calm amidst all. Jehovah still reigns in His holy temple—the heavens. His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. The time of the wicked is coming. Looking down it may be, as he meditates, into the gloomy ravines which open from the wilderness of Judah, on the Dead Sea, he is reminded of the fate of the cities of the plain, and finds in it the future of his enemies. “On the wicked God shall rain coals of fire and brimstone; and a burning tempest will fill their cup.¹ For Jehovah is righteous; He loves everything right; he who is upright will see His face.”² The 59th Psalm,³ as the title informs us, dates from Saul’s sending

¹ *Ewald.*

² Ps. xi. 7, *lit.*

³ The chronological value of the inscriptions of the Psalms has been much disputed, critics like Ewald and Hupfeld treating them as unworthy of serious notice. But I am contented to follow such as Tholuck, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch and Keil, in regarding the immemorial age of these superscriptions—the fact that ancient Arabic compositions are very often prefaced in this way by their authors,—that not a few Psalms are left without titles—that those given vary greatly in character and form; and their harmony with the contents of the Psalms to which they are prefixed—as ample vindication of their trustworthiness. Much more at least can be said in favour of their being as old as the Psalms themselves to which they are joined, than against it, nor have I any sympathy with the idea that modern acuteness can fix the dates of these inspired compositions more exactly than the Jewish Rabbis have done, even were the inscriptions their work, which I by no means grant. That these are in the Hebrew Bible carries them back at least to the age of Ezra and the Great Synagogue, and it is hardly likely that interpolations

his soldiers to watch David's house and kill him. Those of the 57th and 142nd refer them to the dark days when "he fled from Saul in the cave." The 56th is assigned to the time "when the Philistines took him in Gath." The 34th to that "when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech," or Achish, "who drove him out, and he departed;" and the 63rd is said to have been composed during his subsequent wanderings in the wilderness of Judea. Thus, while apparently, like Jephthah, only the independent chief of a band, making war on his own account on the foes of Israel beyond the borders, as occasion offered, living in fact a seemingly lawless life, David was very much more. Beneath the rough exterior of the chief of such a force as his, his heart beats with the tenderest religious emotions. If fierce in war, he is no less earnest in wrestling with his own soul, and he withdraws from the din of the camp to find his purest joy in lofty communion with God.

The number of David's followers gradually swelled first to 400, and then to 600 men,¹ but it was difficult to know how to employ them. War against Saul was not to be thought of, for he was still, in their leader's eyes, the "Anointed of God," to injure whom was to sin against Jehovah. To plunder his brethren never entered his mind. But so large a number of fiery spirits could not remain idle, and they needed support. Before all, however, David felt it necessary to place his aged parents beyond the reach of Saul. Marching therefore southwards over the wild hills round the lower end of the Dead Sea, he took them to Moab: his old family connection with Moab, through his ancestress Ruth, apparently in the sacred books would be permitted in that day of awful reverence for the ancient text.

¹ 1 Sam. xxiii. 13.

leading him to select that kingdom as a refuge. There he placed them under the care of its king, at Mizpeh, a spot not hitherto identified, "till he knew what God would do for him."¹ It marks the earnestness of soul ever shining out from him, that the 27th Psalm seems to record his secret thoughts in these days of anxiety and danger:

"Jehovah is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?
Jehovah is the protector of my life: before whom need I be
dismayed?"

When the wicked come against me, to devour my flesh—
My foes and my enemies—mine alone—
They stumbled and fell—not I?

Should even an army encamp against me, my heart has no fear;
Though war should rise against me: still I shall be confident.

One thing have I besought from Jehovah: that I desire:
To live in the House of Jehovah all the days of my life;
To see with glad eyes His goodness,
And to meditate in His (temple).²

For He hides me in His pavilion in the time of trouble
He protects me in the covert of His tent;
He lifts me up upon a rock.

Therefore will my head be lifted up above my enemies round
about me:
And I shall offer in His Tent sacrifices of rejoicing:
I will sing and play to Jehovah.

¹ Sam. xxii. 3. *Weiss* (p. 90) supposes that Jesse and David's mother were left in Kir-Moab, the capital of the country, and that he himself and his band went to a stronghold (1 Sam. xxii. 4, 5) "half a day's journey to the south, where a steep rock affords a wide outlook to Bethlehem and Jerusalem—a true mizpeh, or watch-tower."

² The Tabernacle is called a temple. 2 Sam. xxii. 7.

Hear, Jehovah; my voice, when I cry :
 Have mercy upon me and answer me—
 (When Thou sayest), 'Seek ye My face;' my heart says of Thee,
 'Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.'

Hide not Thy face from me :
 Cast not Thy servant away, in anger !
 Thou hast been my help,
 Leave me not, neither forsake me,
 O God of my salvation.
 Though my father and mother may have left me
 Yet Jehovah will take me up.¹

Show me, O Jehovah, Thy way,
 And lead me in a smooth path,
 Because of my enemies.
 Give me not up to the rage of my enemies;
 For false witnesses stand up against me,
 And such as breathe out fierceness.

Did I not believe that I would see
 The goodness of Jehovah, in the land of the living—
 (I had sunk into despair!)

Cling thou to Jehovah !
 Be strong, and let thine heart take courage;
 Yes! hope in Jehovah!²

While thus across the Jordan, he appears to have formed friendly relations with Nahash, king of Ammon, the old assailant of Jabesh Gilead, by whom he would be well received as the supposed enemy of Saul.³ Meanwhile the charm of safety and peace, even as an exile, almost induced him to stay permanently outside the bounds of Israel. But his higher feelings, quickened by an appeal of the prophet Gad, who had gone to Moab with him, determined him to return and risk his life, rather

¹ Orientals often live in their father's house till his death.

² *Ewald. Moll. Lengerke. Kay. Hitzig.*

³ Follows from 2 Sam. x. ii.

than stay in a heathen country. To do so would seem to be trusting in its false gods and slighting the protection of Jehovah. His enemies had driven him out from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, telling him to go and serve other gods;¹ but he would rather die in the inheritance of his own God than prosper in the land of Chemosh. To be away from Israel, moreover, was to be out of the sight, and to fall gradually out of the thoughts, of his people. In its bounds, on the other hand, he might show how faithful he was to the interests of the nation, and be at hand to use any opportunity Providence might offer, to become its deliverer and head, which he of all living men was best fitted to be.

The first rendezvous of David's band, after his return from Moab, was in the thicket of Hareth,² among the hills, nine miles north-west from Hebron. Here news was brought him of the terrible results of his visit to the priest colony of Nob, on his way from Ramah to Gath. Saul, it appeared, while one day sitting as usual, spear in hand, under the tamarisk tree upon the hill-side at Gibeah,³ surrounded by his personal attendants—Benjamites, like himself—had broken out in a wild tirade against them and even against Jonathan, for their supposed conspiracy with David to dethrone him. Jealousy had mastered his whole nature, and he saw everything through its light. Would David give them fields and vineyards, and set them over hundreds and thousands, as he had done? Why had no one told him of the league between his son Jonathan and the fugitive who lay in wait to destroy him? Doeg, the Edomite, one of those thus upbraided, forthwith only too readily revealed what he knew of David—how he had seen him at Nob,

¹ 1 Sam. xxvi. 19.

² "City" in *Sept.*

³ 1 Sam. xxii. 6, *lit.*

and how the high priest had given him food and the sword of Goliath. Forthwith, the whole priestly population thus compromised were summoned to Gibeah, and arraigned as traitors, for harbouring and aiding the king's enemy. The high priest as their head had to answer for all. He had been guilty beyond any other, by enquiring of God on David's behalf—"to find out," added Saul, "how he should rise against or lie in wait for me?" In vain Ahimelech manfully defended David as no traitor but loyal, as became "the captain of the body guard." As to himself, he was ignorant of the matters of which Saul spoke. Nothing would calm the king's fury. The attendants, or "runners," as they were called, from their office of swift couriers to execute the king's pleasure, were ordered to slay all the priests on the spot. Not to have disclosed David's presence at Nob, showed that they were on his side. But no one would touch members of the sacred order. Doeg, the alien, however, glad of an opportunity of gratifying his inborn hatred of Israel, had no such scruples, and deliberately slew them all. Eighty-five "persons who wore a linen ephod" thus perished, but the massacre did not end with them. Hastening to Nob, which was close at hand, Doeg treated it as a place "devoted" in the name of God¹ to utter destruction, and killed not only the men and women, children and babes, but even the oxen, asses, and sheep.

The folly of this infamous deed was only equal to its criminality. The prophets had already cast Saul off, and now he had turned the priesthood against him. It seemed as if he were intent on making himself as much hated as his rival was loved. Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech, and the sole survivor of the massacre of his family, fled to

¹ Lev. xxvii. 28. Deut. xiii. 13.

David, who thus learned what had been done. His grief knew no limits, and it is not without good grounds that his indignation at Doeg and Saul is believed to have found utterance in the words of the 52nd Psalm :—

“God shall break thee down for ever,
He shall seize thee and hurl thee away tentless (homeless),¹
And root thee out of the land of the living.”

Regarding himself as in some measure the cause of the calamity, he at once took Abiathar under his protection, which the high-priestly dignity of the new guest amply repaid. The ephod had been saved, and David had now not only the guidance of the Urim and Thummim, but also the consideration derived from its presence with him, which lent him what had hitherto been a royal characteristic. But Saul was not to be outdone in this respect; for Zadok, the son or grandson of Ahitub, a former high priest, was raised to that dignity to give him, also, sacred responses.

The massacre of the Canaanite population of Gibeon and its confederate towns,² which formed so dark a stain on Saul's memory, seems to have been occasioned by that of the priests at Nob. Seized with remorse at his act, the unfortunate king appears to have determined, in his wild blind way, to atone to Jehovah for the outrage, by showing his zeal against the heathen remnant of the native inhabitants. Instead of the Tabernacle at Nob, now polluted by his violence, he would build another at Gibeon,³ and transfer thither the seat of national worship; first, however, purifying the spot, as he fancied, by putting to death all its non-Israelite population. The citizens of the small Canaanitish republic may have resisted his

¹ *Hupfeld.*

² 2 Sam. xxi. 1, 2, 5.

³ 1 Kings ii. 28, 29; 1 Chron. xvi. 39.

design of substituting their town for that of Nob, and thus have drawn down on themselves his wrath; but, if so, he used their opposition as a pretext for their destruction, to mitigate the fierce indignation felt through the land for his terrible act at Nob.¹ It is very likely, moreover, that the seizure of the lands of the townsmen, which would be confiscated to the king by their death, might be another motive, as they would help him to bribe the support of additional dependents.

Meanwhile David, who still camped at Hareth, was in constant fear of being betrayed to Saul. He was no doubt glad, therefore, when news reached him that the Philistines had made a new inroad on Keilah, a town on a steep hill, overlooking the valley of Elah or the Terebinth, ■ short way south of Hareth and Adullam. But inaction had demoralized his band, and it was not till a favourable answer had been twice received from the Urim and Thummim that it would move out to the attack. A swift march of a few miles, and a sharp struggle, now rescued Keilah and scattered its dreaded assailants. It seemed at last as if David had a safe retreat. But the news of his courageous act soon reached Saul, and his presence in a walled town was welcomed as an opportunity for easily seizing him. David's spies, however, gave him timely notice of Saul's approach with a large force. Dreading a severe revenge on Keilah for harbouring him, he would have chivalrously stayed to defend it, but finding its citizens would betray him, he and his band moved away. It was now, apparently that he uttered his thanks for this deliverance, in the words of the 31st Psalm. Jehovah was his "crag" and his fortress, and for His name's sake would lead and guide him. He would pull him out of the net they had laid privily for

. ¹ Bertheau, *Geschichte*, p. 310.

him; for He was his "stronghold." Into His hand he committed his spirit; for He had redeemed him, and was the Lord God of truth.¹ "Blessed be Jehovah for He hath showed me His marvellous kindness in a besieged city."²

But it was no longer safe to return to Adullam, or the rich corn valley of Elah, or to the thickets of Hareth, close by, as Saul knew of these having been his resorts, and could easily reach them. Turning south, therefore, he betook himself to the neighbourhood of Ziph, about 4 miles below Hebron,³ and about 12 miles, as the crow flies, south-east of Keilah. Here, 2,882 feet above the sea, in a region full of caves in the limestone rocks, with two roads passing underneath the hill on which the village stood—one south to Carmel, Maon, and Beersheba; the other north-west—he could hope to elude his pursuers, at least for a time. It is said in Samuel that he hid in "the wood" near this place; but Lieut. Conder questions if the word rendered "wood" in our Bibles, really means so, as it seems impossible, in his opinion, that any "trees could ever have flourished over this unwatered and sun-scorched region."⁴ Yet as verdure itself attracts moisture, and its destruction leaves the exposed soil to become more and more incapable, by drought and consequent barrenness, of being covered with it again, it may be that the translation is, after all, correct. Nor is it to be forgotten that Prof. Palmer found at Garaiyeh, nearly 90 miles south of Hebron, where it is much hotter and more desolate than the country round Ziph, the remains of a building in which were beams of seyel or acacia wood,

¹ Ps. xxxi. 3-5.

² Ver. 21, strong = besieged.

³ *Great Palestine Map of Pal. Fund. Survey*, sheet 21.

⁴ *Tent Work*, p. 243.

with signs of mortices, bolts, etc.,¹ showing that trees grew even there.

Ziph stands near the edge of one of those great steps by which the level of the country suddenly descends, in successive plateaus, to the desert of Sinai. The level at the foot of the step is about 2,600 feet above the sea and 500 below that of the watershed of Hebron. The soil is a soft white chalk, spread out in open wolds, with hollows of arable land. There are no springs in this region; the rain sinking through the porous rocks and running off through underground chinks and rifts. Cisterns and tanks, however, formerly retained supplies for the population that wandered over it or dwelt in its towns. On the south, another step leads down to the white marl desert of Beersheba; on the west are the Philistine plains; and on the east, 300 feet below, is the dreary "Jeshimon," or waste, to which David soon after fled. The whole district is dry and treeless, but rich in flocks and herds which pasture on the sparse vegetation of the downs and wadys. Part of the Negeb, or south country, it seems to have once been the home of the Horites, or cave-men, for it is full of caves, at one time used as dwellings, and the name of the ancient inhabitants is preserved in those of two of the ruined towns.²

In this region, secluded though it was, David found no rest. His presence was soon betrayed to Saul, and a large force sent off to capture or kill him. But Jonathan,

¹ *The Desert of the Tih*, p. 17. The word translated wood in our version, is Choresch, which Lieut. Conder, himself, tells us (*Pal. Fund Report*, 1866, p. 124) means "copse or underwood," such as still exists, and is called *hish* by the peasants. There is a tell, or mound, near Ziph, now called Choreisa—evidently the same word as Choresch.

² *Tent Work*, p. 244.

true to his noble friendship, took care to forewarn him, in a personal meeting, undertaken, probably, for the special purpose. That David would be the future king, and that Saul would not be able to injure him, was, he declared, known to his father. For himself, he only wished to be next below him.¹ Then, renewing their old covenant of mutual fidelity, the two parted, never to meet again; David returning to the thickets, Jonathan to his house at Gibeah. The meeting had strengthened David's trust in God,² but the greatest caution was still needed to escape the dangers around. The Ziphites, grateful, perhaps, to Saul for his victory over the Amalekites, in the neighbourhood, a few years before, sent to him to say that they would, if he wished, betray his foe into his hands. But, once more, the fugitive received timely warning. Descending the crags from the plateau of Ziph³ to that below it, he and his men fled to Maon, about 5 miles south of Ziph, and hid in the ravines of a hill close by, which rises in a great hump of rock,⁴ 2,887 feet above the sea.⁵ But the pursuers followed so closely, led by the Ziphites, that he had barely time to descend the one side of the mountain while they were climbing the other.⁶ At this moment, however, news came to Saul, who led the pursuit in person, that the Philistines,

¹ 1 Sam. xxiii. 17.

² 1 Sam. xxiii. 16.

³ 1 Sam. xxiii. 24, "came down into a rock," *lit.* "descended a rock."

⁴ *Tent Work*, p. 244.

⁵ *Large Map of Palestine, Palestine Fund Survey*, sheet 25.

⁶ Conder mentions a great gorge in the neighbourhood of Maon which is called the Valley of Rocks. It is a narrow but deep chasm, impassable except by a detour of many miles. He supposes this to have been the scene of the near capture of David. Saul might have stood within sight of his enemy, while still quite unable to get at him. *Tent Work*, p. 245.

taking advantage of his absence from Gibeah, had again invaded the land, and he had for the time to let David escape, and to call back his force.

Hunted like a partridge,¹ from hill to hill, his very footsteps tracked,² there was, indeed, only a step between the outlawed man and death.³ But these terrible months or, it may be, years, were not without their high value as a discipline for the future. In the demands of a position so uncertain and so constantly changing, all the resources of David's mind were developed. The command of his force in so rude a scene was preparing him to be the ruler of men on a greater scale. His constant danger and realized weakness threw him, moreover, with a fullness he might not otherwise have felt, on the supporting providence of God. He alone could be his "fortress," "his high crag," "his strength," his "deliverer," his "rock in which he found refuge and trusted," his "shield," the "horn of his salvation," and his "high tower."⁴ The wilderness of Judah, tradition informs us, heard his pathetic cry: "O God, thou art my God; early⁵ will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."⁶ It was there he sang—

"Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life,
My lips shall praise Thee. . . .

Because thou hast been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

¹ 1 Sam. xxvi. 20. For the words, "come out to seek a flea," read "come out to seek my life." *Sept.*

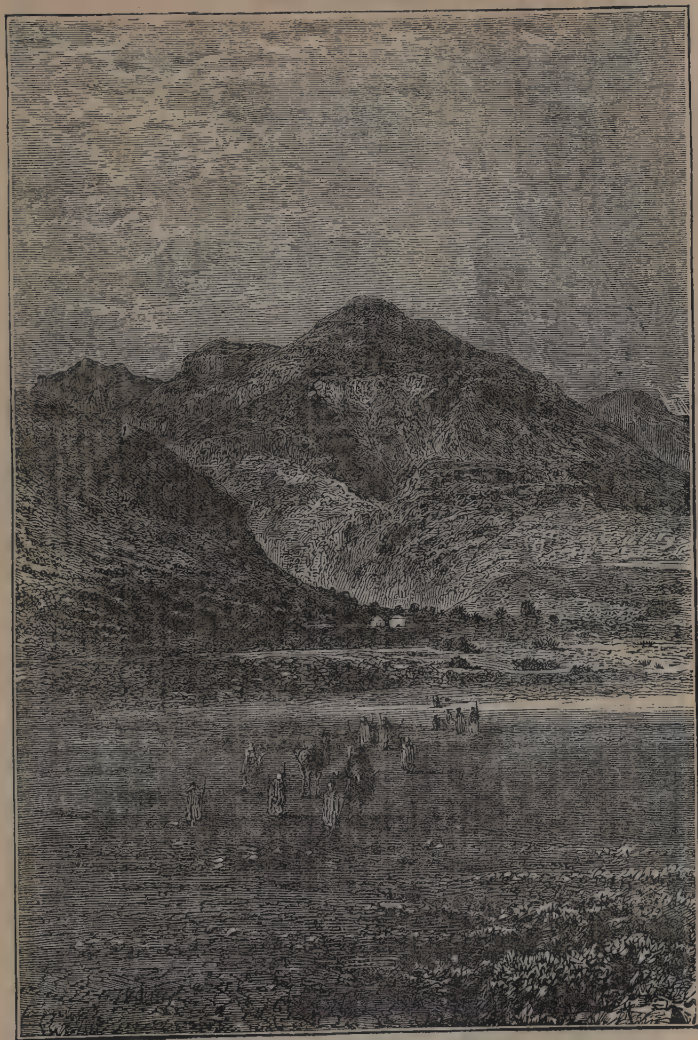
² 1 Sam. xxiv. 23, for "where his haunt is," read "where his passing foot is." *Ewald. Thenius.*

³ 1 Sam. xx. 3.

⁴ Ps. xviii. 2.

⁵ Or, earnestly.

⁶ Ps. lxiii. 1.



ENGEDI, FROM UNDER JEBEL SHUKIF.
From a water colour by W. C. P. Medlycott.

My soul followeth hard after Thee,
Thy right hand has upheld me.

But those who seek my life,
Let them go into the lower parts of the earth.¹
Let them be given over to the sword!
Let them be a portion for jackals!²

The 54th Psalm, also ascribed to this period, expresses the same trust in God amidst the utmost peril. It was a hard school, but it made David all that he afterwards became.

To escape a fresh pursuit from Saul in the same region, he seems now to have led his men into the dreary solitude known as Jeshimon, or The Waste, on the east of Ziph—a district of white peaks and cones of chalk, and deep narrow wadys, stretching away to the great pointed cliff of Ziz, above Engedi, with its line of precipices 2,000 feet high, over the Dead Sea.³ Unhabited and uninhabitable for about 60 miles north and south, from the oasis of Jericho to the Wady Fikrah—with an average breadth of about 15 miles—it is a wide plateau, from the rough surface of which rise many low hills and ridges of rock; in some parts forming continuous lines, in others sinking by steps towards the Dead Sea, where they form a lofty table-land from 1,500 to 2,000 feet above the level of the waters. This plateau is cut up by deep gorges, worn by the torrents and also by volcanic action. Nothing green refreshes the eye over the wide landscape. No stream waters it but when the rains for a time fill the wadys with rushing torrents. Only the black tents of wandering Arabs vary the dreary prospect, except where

¹ = "Let them descend to the darkness of Sheol,"—the underworld—that is, "let them die."

² Ps. lxiii. 3, 7-10.

³ *Tent Work*, p. 244. The pass of Ziz = that of Engedi.

the mouths of ravines show the Dead Sea far below, and the mountains of Moab beyond it.¹

Retiring gradually to the eastern edge of this desolate region, on the short-lived spring herbage of which he had often pastured his flocks in happier days, David at last sought a retreat in the cliffs of Engedi,—“the Spring of the Goats”—on the edge of the Dead Sea. The scenery



ENGEDI, LOOKING SOUTH.—Lieut. Conder, R.E.

here is savage in the extreme. Precipices on three sides, bounded by tremendous gorges, run down to the shore beneath. A winding track cut in the perpendicular rocks is the only means of descent; a single false step is death, for it would hurl one to the bottom, 2,000 feet below. A warm spring, from which the place takes its name, bursts from under a huge boulder 1,340 feet beneath the summit; the water streaming over the steep

¹ *Furrer und Schenkel*, vol. v. p. 680. *Tent Work*, p. 263.

from amidst a thicket of canes and bushes, the home of thrushes, grakles, and warblers; its course marked by a fringe of vegetation as it falls. Six hundred feet below, outside the slope of debris from the heights above, a small oasis is reached, once famed for its palms, balsam, and wine.¹ To this wild spot, well called the "rocks of the wild goats," since only they and the gazelle could find footing on the narrow ledges of the cliffs,—David had to flee, hiding in the caverns with which the whole of the mountains are full.

But even here Saul followed him, in his jealous hatred, with a force of no fewer than 3,000 men. He was fated, however, to meet a rebuke little expected. He had retired one day to a roomy cave in which, as it happened, David and his men sat, unseen, in the darkness, as he entered from the outer light. Nothing could have been easier than to have killed him, and it was whispered to David by his companions that he should do so, or let them do it. But the magnanimity of the persecuted man was only equalled by the religious awe in which he held the person of "the Anointed of Jehovah," and no inducement would tempt him to such treason. Stepping, gently, however, towards Saul, as he sat with his face outwards,—the skirts of his wide mantle reaching far behind,—he silently cut off a piece of its edge; an act which, innocent as it seems, smote his heart on the moment, as an offence against one so sacred. Waiting till Saul had left the cave, he followed, and calling after him, discovered himself, showing, as he did so, the piece of the skirt in his hand, that he might judge how guiltless he was of designs against him, since he had left him uninjured when thus most in his power. The better spirit of the king, touched by the sight of one he had

¹ Cant. i. 14. Jos., *Ant.*, IX. i. 2. *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 73.

loved, and by such a proof of fidelity, could not withstand an incident so tender. Weeping aloud, he owned that David was a better man than himself. It was clear, he added, that God intended to give him the kingdom, and that permanently; not for a time, as in his own case. Would he only promise that on coming to the throne he would not cut off his—Saul's—family and destroy his name? Willingly swearing this, the two parted in peace for the moment. But David was too much afraid of the king's jealousy waking again, to trust himself in his reach, and still remained in the wilderness.

The death of Samuel, which happened about this time, plunged the nation into grief; but David, much as he must have desired it, dared not be present at his burial. Wails and lamentations were heard in every town and village of the land, such as had once risen as a last tribute to the worth of Moses and Aaron,¹ and the rare honour of burial within the walls of a town—Ramah, his home—was accorded to his remains. Except kings, no one but the high priest, Jehoiada, had such an intramural interment in the long course of Jewish history.²

After the death of the great prophet, David returned to his old haunts in the Hebron district, where, for a time, he supported himself and his band, as is still common with Arab sheiks, by protecting outlying herds and possessions from marauders, in return for contributions of food. It was now that an incident happened

¹ Num. xx. 29. Deut. xxxiv. 8.

² Antiquity was very strict in this matter. At Rome, even as early as the Laws of the Twelve Tables, intramural burial was strictly prohibited. The only exception was in favour of the vestal virgins, and the families of one or two great men; of Valerius Poplicola and Fabricius, for example. But this privilege was abandoned by their descendants, no doubt in deference to public feeling. See, also, Lenormant, *La Divination*, p. 162.

which vividly illustrates his wilderness life. The great man of the hill town of Maon was one Nabal, a descendant of Caleb, the owner of large flocks and of rich possessions in Carmel, close by. Having heard that he was holding his yearly feast of sheep shearing, David sent ten of his men with a courteous message, wishing him prosperity—reminding him of the security he had enjoyed through the protection of the envoys and their fellows—and finally asking for a gift on their behalf, of “whatsoever came to his hands.”¹ A rough insolent answer, however, was the only response. Fierce when roused, David, with Arab-like excitability, forthwith vowed vengeance, declaring that before next morning every male of the household should perish. Luckily for all, one of the herdsmen hurried to Nabal’s wife, Abigail, a woman as prudent as her husband was the reverse, hastily telling her how David, who must have been well known as the conqueror of Goliath and the king’s son-in-law, had sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute Nabal, and how they had been met with insolent words, and told that David was no better than a runaway slave from his master Saul. Yet he and his men, added the speaker, had been a wall to the flocks and herds, day and night, protecting them from enemies; and had at all times been kind and courteous. Knowing what would follow under such circumstances, she instantly ordered asses to be laden with bread, wine, sheep ready dressed, roasted corn, raisins and cakes of figs, and herself took them to David, whom she found

¹ Even in our own day, an Arab sheik wandering near a town or village could hardly fail, on occasion of such a yearly feast as that of Nabal, to come in person, or to send by his messengers, to ask that his services, as the protector of the flocks in the wilderness, from other tribes, should be remembered. *Stäbelin*.

actually on the way with his men to carry out his revenge. Throwing herself on her face, and pleading her husband's folly and churlishness as his excuse, her prudent words saved her household and even won the thanks of David, for stopping him from "entering into blood-guiltiness."¹ That night, Nabal—"the Fool"—had been holding a special rejoicing, "like the feast of a king," and was too full of wine to be told either the danger he had run, or his escape. Next morning, however, the whole situation flashed on him so fully that he sank, struck with apoplexy or paralysis, and never rallied. Ten days later he was dead. But Abigail's charms, aided perhaps by her wealth, had won the heart of David at first sight, and as soon as her seven days' mourning² for Nabal were over, the rich and beautiful widow became his wife.³ Michal, Saul's daughter, his first wife, had been illegally torn from him, and given by her father to Phalti, or Phaltiel, of Gallim, a village apparently near Bethlehem,⁴ perhaps to attach him to the dynasty, but David had already consoled himself for her temporary loss by marrying Ahinoam, from Jezreel, near Nabal's

¹ 1 Sam. xxv. 26, 33. Abigail's expression, "The soul of my lord shall be bound up in the bundle of life," is illustrated by the Hindoo use of the same figure. An upright judge is "bound up in the bundle of justice;" an enamoured youth is "bound up in the bundle of love." Abigail intended to say that the life of David would be under Divine protection. Roberts's *Oriental Illustrations*.

² Ecclus. xxii. 13.

³ It is to be noticed how Abigail came at once, of her own accord, to David, to be his wife, on his messengers going to her, after Nabal's death, with the message, "David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife." He seems already to speak like a king commanding any one he chose to come to his harem. 1 Sam. xxv. 40.

⁴ Conder, *Handbook*, p. 411.

estate at Carmel.¹ That he should now have married Abigail, also, was an evil omen for his future peace. As the first step towards polygamy, it led the way to all the miseries of his later years.

These marriages show that in spite of the dangers he had run, David's fortunes were steadily rising. His nephews, who early joined him, had been the beginning of constant accessions of fierce and skilful warriors, who came, attracted by his fame or discontented with Saul. But his troubles were not yet ended. Saul's furious jealousy ere long broke out again, and a second large force, under Abner, but accompanied by the king himself, marched south, to try once more to take his enemy, through the treacherous help of the Ziphites. Eagerly watching from the top of some hill, David noted, by the clear light of a Syrian moon and the stars, or by the camp fires,—where his force, tired by their march, had at last rested, within the usual ramparts of wagons and baggage.² Knowing the carelessness of Arab encampments—for the Israelites were as yet Arabs in their ideas of war—he determined, like Gideon, to steal into their midst by night, and, if possible, end this renewed pursuit by a stroke that would appeal to Saul's better nature. Descending from the hills, therefore, with Abishai, in the darkness, they penetrated, unobserved, to where the king lay asleep, surrounded by Abner and his body guard, in the very midst of his men.³ His long

¹ In 1 Sam. xxv. 43, for "took" read "had taken." Ahinoam comes before Abigail in chap. xxvii. 3. Amnon, her son, is also called David's firstborn. 2 Sam. iii. 2; 1 Sam. xxx. 5; and in 2 Sam. ii. 2.

² 1 Sam. xxvi. 5.

³ Morier tells us that the army of the king of Persia was encamped in a vast circle round his tent, so that no one could get at him without passing through the whole host. *Second Journey*, p. 269.

spear, the badge of his rank, was stuck in the ground at his head,¹ and a cruse of water, bound to the saddle of his ass by day,² lay near. Abishai would have had David seize the opportunity and kill him, but again he refused to lift his hand against the Anointed of Jehovah. Contenting himself with taking the spear and the water cruse, he returned to the top of the hill Hachilah, near by. The excitement in Saul's camp at daybreak was great, but it was increased when David was seen high up, on the other side of a deep gorge,³ with both spear and cruse in his hands. In the clear air he was instantly known. Calling aloud to Abner, he taunted him with his want of care of the king, and holding aloft his trophies, pleaded also with Saul himself, to cease from hunting after a subject incapable of successfully opposing him, and so unmistakably loyal. Touched with this renewed proof of magnanimity from one whom he sought to destroy, the king returned to Gibeah, leaving David for the time in peace.

There was no permanent rest, however, for the object of so deadly a hatred, and it seemed very soon no longer safe for the sore-hunted man to remain in the limits of Israel. He resolved, therefore, to go once more to Achish, at Gath; his force, now risen to 600 men, giving him a weight and rank that would secure a hearty welcome, as a supposed enemy of Saul. Anxious, however, to be out of the way, to avoid compromising himself in any inroads against his own countrymen, he asked and obtained the gift of Ziklag, a distant frontier

¹ "We recognised the sheik's tent among a group of twenty others, of which the encampment consisted, by a tall spear planted against it."—Tristram, *Land of Israel*, p. 259. *Land and Book*, p. 367.

² *Furrer*, p. 81.

³ 1 Sam. xxvi. 13.

town,¹ on the edge of the desert, 20 miles south-east of Beersheba,² and nearly 50 from Gath. There he could be of use in defending Achish from Arab raids, and at the same time escape the necessity of attacking his own country. He remained here for a year and four months,³ as a border chief, busy in forays against the Amalekites and other related tribes of the desert farther south—the old enemies of Israel. Meanwhile, to win the confidence of Achish, he did not scruple to represent his raids as made against different parts of the Negeb settled by Judah, and its hereditary allies, the Kenites; supporting this by relentlessly killing all the Amalekites and others, of both sexes, who fell into his hand, to prevent news of his duplicity reaching Gath.⁴ Thither, moreover, part of the herds and flocks taken were sent as tribute, in compliance with the league made between them. That one who could compose such Psalms as his should be capable of habitual deception and unrestrained slaughter, even of women and children, only illustrates the low moral standard of the age, and the strange contradictions of human nature. Nor is it to be forgotten that the higher and nobler side of David's nature is the more to be honoured by its contrast with characteristics in which he resembled the men around him. Spiritual development such as his, in an age so rude, crafty, and bloodthirsty, is in itself a miracle of which the only explanation is that he owed it to Divine inspiration.

His stay at Ziklag was marked by a great addition to the number of his followers, of whom not a few were now men of note. Among others came Jashobeam, of the clan

¹ From this gift Ziklag became an appanage of the kings of Judah. 1 Sam. xxvii. 6.

² *Kiepert's Map.*

³ 1 Sam. xxvii. 24.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxvii. 8-12.

of Hachmon, apparently a descendant of the Korah who perished in the wilderness.¹ His fellows boasted of him that in one of David's raids he himself speared 300 men;² Eleazar, one of the three chief men in David's army, who, in one of the repeated encounters with the Philistines at Ephes-dammim, in a foray into Judah by that pass, stood firm when the Israelites fled, and smote the enemy till his hand was weary, the people returning from flight only after the victory, to seize the spoil; Shammah,³ who, when the men round him had fled, kept his ground against the Philistines, in defence of a plot of barley, and drove off the enemy. Benaiah, also, the son of the high priest Jehoiada, throwing off his ephod, came from Kabzeel, in southern Judah;⁴ a man already famous, but still further destined to win special laurels in David's future war with Moab, in which he slew two of the royal princes.⁵ He was also known to have let himself down into a cistern, in which a lion, driven by a snow-storm in winter from his haunts, had sought refuge, and to have killed it there. A huge Egyptian, whose spear was like a weaver's beam, had also fallen before him, though he had only a staff as a weapon; closing with him, he had wrenched his huge spear from his hand and slain him with it.⁶ There was Sibbechai also, who slew Sippai, one of the old gigantic race of the Canaanites; and Elhanan, who slew the brother of Goliath; and Jonathan, David's brother,

¹ 1 Chron. xii. 6.

² 800 in 2 Sam. xxiii. 8. For "Adino the Ezrite," read "lifted up his spear."

³ 2 Sam. xxiii. 11, 12. The notice of Shammah is omitted from the parallel passage in 1 Chron. xi. 13, and in the opinion of many critics should be inserted after the word "battle." For "lentils" in the passage in Sam., read "barley."

⁴ *Bertheau*.

⁵ This is Bertheau's rendering.

⁶ 1 Chron. xi. 22.

who slew a huge man of Gath, famed for an extra toe on each foot and an extra finger on each hand.¹ Eliam, the son of Ahithophel, and father of Bathsheba, afterwards the occasion of David's greatest sin, and well nigh of his ruin; and Uriah, the Hittite, her husband, now also joined the swelling force. Nor were the additions confined to individuals. A band from Saul's own tribe, Benjamites, armed with bows, and able to use them and their slings equally well with both the right hand and the left, arrived. Eleven men from Gad, mighty in handling shield and spear,² with faces like lions, and feet swift as the gazelles on the mountains, swam the Jordan when it was in flood, and made their way to Ziklag. Thirty men also joined from Reuben, with their captain;³ men came in from Judah; and even a band from Manasseh, all famous braves of the tribe,⁴ joined immediately before Saul's death.

"Day by day," says the sacred writer, "there came to David, to help him, till he had a great host, like the host of God."⁵ In all, he found himself now at the head of 600 men, of whom thirty-seven formed a special body of heroes, three—Jashobeam, Shammah, and Eleazar—being distinguished even among these, as the bravest of the brave.

But a change in David's position was near. The Philistines had resolved on a decisive war with Saul, to obtain control of the caravan route through Esdraelon. Things had never prospered with him since he had turned against his son-in-law. His doing so had made David involuntarily a rival, to whom the best men of

¹ 1 Chron. xx. 4-8.

² For "buckler," read "spear" (1 Chron. xii. 8.)

³ 1 Chron. xi. 42.

⁴ 1 Chron. xii. 21.

⁵ 1 Chron. xii. 22.

the tribes were attracted, and he himself had lost spirit. An invasion of the northern plain was a far greater danger than he had yet had to face, for the chariots and cavalry of the Philistines would be able to manœuvre on it freely, and it was hard to resist them with only arrows and slings. His enemies, moreover, strained every nerve to secure victory. Besides their own troops, David had been ordered to add his to the invading force. Fortunately, however, the Philistine chiefs distrusted him, and demanded his dismissal before a battle had taken place; a resolution gladly welcomed by their unwilling ally.

Returning, therefore, to Ziklag, he found that misfortune had overtaken it in his absence. A remnant of the Amalekites whom he had harried so terribly the year before, had taken advantage of his being away; and, after burning the town to the ground, had carried off all the women and children. A wild scene of grief and passion followed, David and his strong men "lifting up their voice and weeping," like true Orientals, "till they had no more power to weep." A bitter cry even rose to stone him, as the cause of their trouble, by having led them, as a corps of the Philistine army, against their brethren—a service they must have abhorred. But, it is added, "David encouraged himself in Jehovah his God,"¹ trusting His promise that He would preserve him from all danger. Grief and recrimination presently, however, gave place to action. Abiathar, the high priest, having consulted the Urim and Thummim, and a favourable answer having been given, David, with his 600 men, started off in a pursuit so swift that 200 had to be left behind, with the baggage, at "the torrent bed of Bezor,"²

¹ 1 Sam. xxx. 4-6.

² Bi-Shur (*Conder*), "near the wilderness of Shur."

south of Gaza.”¹ An Egyptian, found on the way almost dead with thirst and hunger, proved invaluable as a guide. He had fallen sick, and had been ruthlessly left behind by his master, without food or water, three days before. Led by him, they soon reached the “troop” of plunderers, who, thinking themselves safe, were feasting and dancing for joy at the huge spoil they had carried off from the land of Judah and of the Philistines. Taken by surprise, they could offer little resistance; and were cut down, with the exception of 400 young men, who rode off on swift camels. The wives and children of the colony of Ziklag were found uninjured, having been intended to be sold or kept as slaves. Moreover, booty so vast was left in David’s hands that he was now for the first time able to send gifts to the towns and villages of the Negeb, which had shown friendliness in the past to himself and his followers. It was on this occasion, we are told, that the rule was laid down, to be henceforth permanently honoured, that the whole force serving in the field should be treated alike in the division of spoil, whether actual combatants, or appointed to guard the baggage.

But a crisis had come in the fortunes of David. Two days after his return to Ziklag, a runner came from the camp of Saul, his clothes rent and dust on his head, to announce the defeat at Gilboa, and the death of the king, with Jonathan, and two of his brothers.

¹ Kiepert’s *Large Map*.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE REIGN OF DAVID.¹

THE death of Saul had at last ended the long pro-
scription of David, and he was free to move back
from the wild uplands of the Negeb to the midst of his
people. For a time, however, it was difficult to know what
step to take. The utter demoralization of the country
after the defeat of Gilboa, and the death of the king
and three of his sons, with the very flower of the
youth of Israel, and almost his whole body guard, who
had died fighting at his side, like the hus-carls round
Harold at Senlac, made it impossible to act vigorously
on the instant. Nor would David on any account begin
a civil war for the crown; and it was uncertain as yet
whether some of Saul's family might not succeed to it.
He resolved therefore to remain for a time at Ziklag
before a final determination was taken.

Meanwhile, his grief at the overwhelming calamity that
had befallen the royal house was deep and sincere. On
first hearing it he and those round him alike gave way to
their feelings as only Orientals can, rending their clothes,
filling the air with loud wailing, weeping like women,

¹ B.C. 1055-1015: *Graetz, Winer.* 1051-1011: *Conder.* 1047-1007:
Bibel Lexicon. 1066-1025: *Ewald.*

and refusing food till the evening.¹ The Amalekite who had brought the bad news was then led to David and questioned. That Saul was dead could not be doubted, for the royal turban or diadem he had worn as his kingly badge, and his armlet, which the stranger bore, were proofs of it.² But his story, tested by the narrative in the sacred text,³ was a mere invention, made up to gain David's favour, and secure a reward.⁴ He had reckoned falsely, however, on the character of the man he thus sought to please by the announcement that the throne was vacant. To the eyes of David the person of Jehovah's Anointed was sacred. He had himself spared Saul twice when he was at his mercy, and now this stranger, of a race which for ages had been the inveterate enemies of Israel, and but as yesterday had laid waste the whole south of Judah, almost to Hebron, with fire and sword,⁵ killing the men, sweeping away the flocks and herds, and carrying off even the women and children, had, according to his own statement, killed Saul after his own armour-bearer had refused to do so. Death, instead of a reward, was the only return for such an act, in the code of those ages.

To David's grief for the death of Saul and of Jonathan, the ideal of friendship, we owe one of the finest odes in Hebrew poetry. It was known in after times as the Song of the Bow,⁶ and has come down to us as a gift from David to the youth of Judah and Israel, which he himself taught them to sing as one of the national lyrics.⁷

¹ 2 Sam. i. 11.

² Both men and women wore armlets. Num. xxxi. 50. The kings of Egypt likewise wore them, and so did Assyrian generals.

³ 1 Sam. xxxi. 3-5.

⁴ 2 Sam. iv. 10.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxx. 14.

⁶ So *Gesenius*, *De Wette* and *Keil*. See verse 22.

⁷ 2 Sam. i. 18. "Israel" is supplied by *Graetz*. It is used instead of "Judah" in a MS. of the *Sept.*

"Thy glory,¹ O Israel
Lies slain on thy heights.
Ah! how are the heroes fallen!

Whisper it not in Gath,²
Tell it not in the streets of Askalon;³
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult!

Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let no dew come upon you, or rain;
Let no fruitful fields on your heights yield offerings;³
For there the shield of the heroes has been stained,⁴ (with
blood and dust,)
The shield (also) of Saul!
The weapons of him who was anointed with oil!—
The bow of Jonathan,
Which never resounded
Without drinking the blood of the slain,
And piercing the fat of the mighty:
The sword of Saul
Which was sheathed only when satisfied!

Saul and Jonathan,
Loved and loving in their lives,
Even in death were not divided.
They were swifter than eagles
Braver than lions!

Ye daughters of Israel
Weep for Saul!
Who clothed you in purple, to your delight;
Who hung your apparel with golden adornments

¹ The Syriac and Ewald, translate it the gazelle, or wild roe, in allusion to Saul. Graetz translates it "the glory," as referring to the slain of all Israel.

² The chief towns of the Philistines.

³ Graetz, vol. i. p. 225, incorporated with Furrer, *Palästina*, p. 260. So, *Erdmann*.

⁴ Not "cast away."

Ah! how are the heroes fallen in battle!
On thy high places (Gilboa) is Jonathan slain!

Woe is me, for thee, my brother Jonathan;
Dear wast thou to me beyond words;
Wonderful was thy love to me,
More than man's love of woman.

How have the heroes fallen!
How have the mighty men of war perished!¹

But grief at the national calamity, that had for the time overthrown the monarchy and given the country into the hands of the "uncircumcised," could not be allowed to paralyze the action needed, especially at such a moment. Unfortunately, David's alliance with Achish, though only nominal, had temporarily lessened his influence with his countrymen to such an extent, that though the whole land had sought to have him as king in times gone by,² no voice was now heard, even from Judah his own tribe, calling him to the vacant throne. He had therefore to regain his lost popularity before any aggressive steps were possible. Always shrewd in his public relations, his first act towards this was to send gifts from the booty taken from the Amalekites,³ to the different towns of the Negeb,⁴ at once to repay their friendliness in the

¹ *Lit.* "instruments." = Saul, Jonathan, and the slain of the host.

² 2 Sam. iii. 17.

³ See p. 182.

⁴ The position of the towns thus rewarded shows on how small a theatre the actions of Jewish history were transacted. "Bethel" or rather Bethul, is not the Bethel in Benjamin, but a place in the neighbourhood of Ziklag. Ramoth seems to have been a village a few miles north of Hebron. Jattir is the present Athir; Eshtemoa is now Es Semua: the name of Aroer survives in that of the *Wady Ararat*; all of them lying within 20 miles of each other, between Hebron and Ziklag. Rachal ought to be read Carmel, four miles north-east from Eshtemoa. So with

past and to propitiate them for the future. The favour shown him by Samuel; the presence with him of the prophet Gad and of the high priest Abiathar; his noble lyrics, and his sacred hymns: his marriage with the daughter of Saul; his great deeds in war from the day of Ephes-dammim to his flight from Nob; and, not least, the strong force he had organized and now led, with its famous heroes—the pride of all Israel—must have told in his favour. But they led to no popular action on his behalf. He resolved, therefore, after consulting the Uriim and Thummim, to go to Hebron, uninvited, and make it his centre in the future. As an ancient holy city, the territory of the famous hero Caleb in the old days of the Conquest, and the capital of Judah, in which the chief men of the tribe resided, it was best suited for his plans. Besides, it lay out of the range of the Philistine occupation, and was in no danger of invasion. Before coming prominently on the great theatre of events, he had to see what Saul's party would do, and to wait till his strength enabled him to attack the victors of Gilboa. Taking with him, therefore, his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and his 600 men with their families, he settled in the venerable city. A footing thus obtained, his personal qualities and the influence of friends soon won over to him the elders of Judah, who before long were glad to put at their head a fellow tribesman¹ so famous. The death of Saul, moreover, opened the way for independent action, such as the pride of Judah craved, and, once chief, David was soon chosen as king; the tribe confirming the election in a popular assembly.²

the other places named: they are all hamlets, towns or villages of the uplands of southern Judea, dotted over a surface not so large as a small English county. 1 Sam. xxx. 26-31.

¹ 2 Sam. ii. 4.

² *Ibid.*

Northern and Central Palestine were still entirely in the hands of the Philistines. Vast numbers of the population had fled in terror to the other side of the Jordan,¹ leaving their cities and towns, without an attempt to defend them, to fall into the hands of the enemy. Judah almost alone had escaped, by its southern position, and in the wreck of the State might well desire an independent leader, who should save it, at least, from the universal ruin. The claim of the house of Saul, moreover, was subordinate to popular election; for mere legitimacy had not yet superseded the free action of the national will. As among our own ancestors down to the time of the Conqueror, the king held his throne not by descent but by the vote of the people, and Judah was therefore justified in acting for itself in this matter, as all that was left of the western kingdom. It is quite possible, however, that, besides these considerations, ■ feeling of haughty superiority which claimed pre-eminence among the tribes, had its own force. Nor can David, as the Anointed of Samuel and of God, be blamed if he accepted a dignity which opened the way to the fulfilment of the Divine purposerespecting him and the nation.

Seven years and a half² were to pass before his reign was to be extended over Israel. Meanwhile, he carefully increased his influence, as opportunity offered. Hearing the valiant act of the men of Jabesh Gilead in carrying off the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from their dishonourable exposure on the wall of Bethshean, he sent messengers to them, thanking them for their deed, promising to requite it, and at the same time telling them of his election by Judah as its king. As usual with Eastern chiefs and princes, marriages also played a great part in this diplo-

¹ 1 Sam. xxxi. 7.

² 2 Sam. v. 4.

matic policy. Four wives were added to his household from different parts of the country—the first of them Maacah,¹ the daughter of Talmai, chief of the old native population of Geshur, a section of the wild and rugged district of the Lejah, in the north-east corner of Bashan, bordering on the territory of Damascus, and never conquered by the tribe of Manasseh² in whose bounds it lay. Is it too much to think that her son, Absalom, born at Hebron, may have inherited from her his wild lawlessness, so natural in the child of an Arab mother from the wild frontier of Aram? Of Haggith—"the dancer"—David's second new wife we know nothing, except that she was the mother of Adonijah, who, like Absalom, was famed for his beauty. His next wife, Abital—"the child of the dew"—is known only as the mother of an obscure prince called Shephatiah. Eglah—"the heifer"—the fourth new wife, was, according to a strange Hebrew tradition, no other than Michal, Saul's daughter, the wife of his youth. It is added that she died when Ithream, her son, was born.³

The chiefs of Saul's army who escaped from the defeat at Gilboa, had fled to the east of the Jordan. Among these Abner, the cousin of Saul, and the head of his forces, proved splendidly faithful to the fallen house. Taking the youngest of Saul's four sons, Eshbaal—"the man of Baal"—latterly known as Ishbosheth—"the man of shame"⁴ or "humiliation,"—he proclaimed him king;

¹ Maacah is the name of a small kingdom in the neighbourhood of Geshur. Deut. iii. 14. Josh. xii. 5.

² Josh. xiii. 13. Comp. 1 Chron. ii. 23.

³ *Jer. Targ. Heb. on* 2 Sam. iii. 5; vi. 23. Michal was childless.

⁴ The dislike of the name Baal in that of a Hebrew prince seems to have led to the change, though the same meaning was, in the opinions of most scholars, retained. Bosheth is supposed

choosing for his capital the ancient sanctuary of Mahanaim, on the east of the Jordan, north-west of the Jabbok, on the border between Gad and Manasseh, and beyond the reach of the Philistines. If venerable associations could have strengthened the new throne, those of such a spot must have done so, for it was here that the vision of the two hosts of angels was vouchsafed to Jacob on his return journey from Harran. It was, moreover, judiciously chosen as to its situation, for the great caravan road from the Red Sea to Damascus passed through it. But Ishbosheth was too weak and irresolute for his position. Though thirty-five years old at his father's death,¹ and his legitimate heir, according to Eastern rules of succession,² he was from the first only a puppet in the hands of Abner, who, however, bore himself as a thoroughly loyal subject, though in fact the virtual king. If any lingering wish to have David over them still remained among the people after the battle of Gilboa, it was quickly suppressed by Abner's vigorous action on behalf of Ishbosheth. Organizing what force he could, that brave and generous soldier slowly but steadily won back much of the country west of the Jordan from the Philistines. From the first the

to have been, in fact, a word of contempt for Baal. So, Jerubbaal was changed into Jerubbesheth (2 Sam. xi. 21) and Meribbaal into Mephibosheth (2 Sam. iv. 4. 1 Chron. viii. 34; ix. 40). These three cases were all in Saul's family. Vaihinger, however, thinks Bosheth, which means "humiliation," "overthrow," as well as "shame," was the name given to Saul's children after the final ruin of their father's dynasty. He quotes in support of this, Ps. xxxv. 4; cxxxii. 18. *Herzog*, vol. vii. p. 83.

¹ *Dict. of Bible*. Vaihinger, seemingly in error, speaks of him as 40.

² Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, was by these rules, ineligible.

eastern tribes had recognised his master. Step by step he conquered for him the district of Geshur,¹ Esdraelon, Ephraim, Benjamin—Saul's own land—till, at last, after a struggle of five years, he could speak of him as king over all Israel, except the tribe of Judah.²

Brought thus, at last, face to face with David, and conscious of the weakness that must rise from the division of the kingdom, Abner at once foresaw and dreaded the outbreak of civil war. Neither David nor Ishbosheth would resign, and, indeed, it is questionable whether their chief men, Joab and Abner, were willing to sink into obscurity. There was, moreover, a jealousy between Judah and the other tribes which hindered union. Ephraim had always been haughty and overbearing, as the representative of Joseph; and Judah, which was despised as a race of peasants, had only latterly allied itself closely with its brethren. The sword, therefore, alone could decide the future.

The advantage in the contest thus inevitable seems to have been from the first with Judah. Though outnumbered by two-thirds, it was united; while the tribes under Ishbosheth were torn by internal rivalries. There was no band in his forces like the valiant 600 who followed David. Over the wide kingdom of Israel, moreover, there was only the weak, unwarlike Ishbosheth, named by Abner as king, living far from the centre of affairs, beyond the Jordan, and never confirmed in his dignity by God; while Judah could boast of David,

¹ By mistake written "Ashur," 2 Sam. ii. 9.

² ■ Sam. ii. 10 speaks of Ishbosheth as forty when he began to reign over all Israel, and of his reigning two years. But we know that David reigned more than seven years at Hebron, and began his reign over Israel at the death of Ishbosheth, which would make the latter thirty-five at the battle of Gilboa.

anointed as king by the great Samuel, the hero of the land from his youth, a trained and skilful warrior, an able and energetic statesman, who from his seat at Hebron could himself direct everything.

Hence when war actually broke out between the houses of Saul and David, the results were steadily unfavourable to the former, in spite of the greater numbers of its adherents.¹ Few details have been preserved, but it would seem that Judah, under the leadership of Joab, gradually won from Israel, under Abner, parts of Benjamin and Dan; for the towns of Zareah and Eshtaol, which had belonged to Dan; the "town of the woods," Kirjath-jearim, whither the Ark had been brought on its recovery from the Philistines; and Mizpeh, on its height, where Saul had been anointed as king, with other towns of Benjamin, were from this time incorporated with Judah.² At last the territory of Judah reached Gibeon, on the north-west, a place belonging to retainers of Saul, and the seat of the Tabernacle after Nob had perished. Fierce struggles for the possession of this spot had been often renewed, till, finally, Abner, to spare further effusion of blood, proposed that the matter should be decided by a combat of twelve men from each host. Goliath had long before demanded a similar fight of single champions, and Joab now accepted the contest invited. Twelve men from David's chosen band forthwith stepped out and were met by twelve Benjamites; but the issue was unexpected. The twelve Benjamites, with the dexterous use of their left hand, for which the tribe had long been famous, seized, each, the head of his adversary with the one hand, and run him through the side by a sword-thrust with the other. But the men of Judah, equally dexterous, had on the instant acted similarly with their

¹ 2 Sam. iii. 1.

² *Gratz*, vol. i. p. 230.

foes, and thus the whole twenty-four fell at the same moment.¹ At such a sight the two main bodies could not be kept apart. A fierce battle arose in which Abner and his men were beaten and fled. Then occurred one of the sad episodes of such warfare. Three of David's nephews or cousins—Joab, the eldest, Abishai, and Asahel, the youngest, the darling of his brothers—were in David's force, and joined in the pursuit of Israel. Asahel, especially, "light of foot as a wild roe," and rash as swift, singled out Abner, and, refusing the mighty warrior's repeated entreaty to turn back, and not force him to a deed which would raise a blood-feud between him and Joab, pressed closer and closer, till Abner, to save his own life, thrust the sharp butt² end of his spear fiercely behind him and pierced the pursuer through and through. But the sight of their youthful hero lying dead only infuriated Joab and his band the more, and the wild chase of the men of Israel continued as fiercely as ever, till Abner's band, despairing of escape, and determined to sell their lives dearly, gathered close round their leader on the top of a hill. From this height Abner, shouting aloud, demanded that the pursuit should cease, to prevent the breaking out of a war of extermination; and prevailed on Joab to call back his men. But even in doing so, his hard relentless nature broke out. "As God liveth," he cried back to Abner, "unless thou hadst spoken, my people would have fol-

¹ Scott, in the *Fair Maid of Perth*, relates an incident in Scottish history not unlike this. Quoting from the chronicler Fordun, he mentions a feud, in 1396, between two clans, which it was proposed to settle by a combat of thirty from each. Twenty men of the one clan and eleven of the other fell almost at once. *Fair Maid of Perth*, preface.

² The butt end of the spear was pointed to thrust into the ground when the weapon was not in use.

lowed you till the morning.”¹ Only 19 men of David’s force, exclusive of Asahel, had fallen; but Abner had lost 360.² Taking with him the corpse of his brother, to bury it in the family tomb at Bethlehem, Joab hastened back with his men to Hebron so swiftly that they reached it by daybreak. Abner, descending into the gorge of Jordan, and striking up that of the Jabbok, made equal speed towards Mahanaim.

The unhappy event at Gibeon seems to have led to a virtual truce between Judah and Israel; war nominally continuing, but active hostilities being suspended.³ Two years passed thus; Judah, under David, still increasing its power; Israel, under the weak Ishbosheth, losing what it had gained.⁴ A fatal quarrel of its shadow-king with Abner, the pillar of his house, at last brought matters to an issue. Among other members of Saul’s family at Mahanaim was his concubine Rizpah,⁵ apparently a descendant of a famous Hivite chief, Aiah, or Ajah,⁶ “the falcon.” She had borne Saul two sons—Armoni, “born in the king’s house,” and Mephibosheth—but was still young and attractive. Rightly or wrongly—perhaps only through the whisper of idle gossip—Ishbosheth had been led to believe that Abner had married her; a serious matter in an Eastern court, where alliance with the wife or concubine of a deceased king is considered as a step towards the throne.⁷ That he should thus be accused of treachery by his master after such multiplied proofs of fidelity, stung him to the heart; for

¹ This is the substance of his words.

² 2 Sam. ii. 30, 31.

³ Keil, *Komment.*, p. 236.

⁴ 2 Sam. iii. 1.

⁵ = The glowing coal.

⁶ Gen. xxxvi. 24. In this verse for “mules” read “hot-springs.” 1 Chron. i. 40.

⁷ Michaelis, *Mos. Recht*, § 54.

even had he wished to marry into Saul's family, he deserved the honour far more than David. Turning on the helpless king in fierce anger, he denounced such treatment at his hands. "Am I," said he, "only a contemptible dog's head?"¹ Am I not fighting against Judah to support the house of Saul thy father, his brethren and his adherents, instead of delivering thee into the hands of David, as I might have done, and yet do you charge me with a fault concerning this woman? The curse of God be on me if I do not henceforth carry out the will of Jehovah, as sworn to David, and transfer the kingdom to him, from the house of Saul, and set up his throne over Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba." Utterly powerless before his imperious vizier, Ishbosheth could not challenge even such defiant treason. His fate was sealed. Overtures were forthwith sent by secret messengers from Abner to David, proposing to transfer his allegiance to him, and to use his influence to bring over all Israel. It was clearly the beginning of the end with Ishbosheth; but David, however pleased at Abner's defection in his own favour, was too cautious to act on his advances without a proof of their honesty. He would only open negotiations if Michal, the wife of his youth, were sent back to him. She had been given by Saul to Phalti, or Phaltiel, a man of Gallim, perhaps to gain his support; and it was desirable that she should be restored,

¹ The dog is regarded in the East with aversion and disgust, from frequently the filthy nature of its food, and from its being ceremonially unclean. See Isa. lxvi. 3. Matt. vii. 6. Dogs are the scavengers of Eastern towns, and thus prevent pestilence; but though permitted to enter houses to eat the crumbs that fall from the table, are not encouraged as with us, or kept in the house as pets. They belong rather to the town. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1831, p. 311; 1832, p. 403.

² Erdmann. Ewald. Keil. Thenius.

at once for his own sake, from a shrewd wish to have at least a nominal connection with the house of Saul, and also to test Abner's power and sincerity. Sending a message to this effect to Ishbosheth, the long lost wife was at once surrendered, and an excuse made for a visit of Abner to David, as her conductor to him. Phaltiel's grief weighed nothing in such a case. Following her, weeping, as far as Bahurim, perhaps on the Mount of Olives,¹ he only turned back at the rude command of Abner, and Michal went passively on towards Hebron.

Communications had been opened by Abner with the elders of Israel, and even of Benjamin, in the interval between his first message to David and this visit, to decide the conditions on which all the tribes would transfer their allegiance from Mahanaim to Hebron. He and twenty attendants who had come with him, were received with marked favour, and honoured by a feast, which seems, in effect, to have been a solemn ratification of the arrangements proposed. Afraid of the rough fierceness and jealousy of Joab, his chief warrior, David had sent him out of the way, in pursuit of some Arabs or Philistines who had been harrying the neighbourhood, but he unfortunately returned, laden with spoil, a short time after Abner had been dismissed by David with every expression of friendship. The news that the chief supporter of Ishbosheth had been at Hebron, and had been feasted, at once roused his worst passions. He had not only the grudge of Asahel's blood to avenge, but very probably feared that Abner would supplant him in his position and in David's favour. Sending a hurried message after him, therefore, as if from the king, he

¹ Possibly Beit Jala, near Bethlehem. Conder, *Handbook*, p. 411. But this hardly suits the proposed identification of Bahurim as on the Mount of Olives. *Rept. Pal. Fund*, Jan. 1881, p. 45.

induced him to return, but only to carry out a treacherous design. Meeting him at the gate of Hebron, and pretending to wish a secret conversation, he drew him aside, and forthwith ran him through with his sword. He had at once avenged his dead brother, and slain a possible rival.

David's grief at this foul murder was profound and sincere. Rending his own garments, and putting on sackcloth, he forced Joab to do the same, and to walk before the bier, with the great ones of the kingdom: himself reverently following it. He who alone was at once able and ready to unite all Israel under one standard, had been remorselessly butchered on the eve of his rendering so great a service! Suspicion might fall on himself of having allured Abner, the single support of Ishbosheth, to his destruction, and this might turn the tribes against him. It seemed, moreover, to stain the steps of his future throne with blood, and to involve him in the basest crime, when, with his whole heart he was striving to lead a worthy life.¹ All he could do was to honour the dead by such a burial as should vindicate his own innocence in respect to him. Refusing food all the day, he lamented him with tears at the grave, moving the whole assembly to weeping by his sadness:

“Should Abner,” wailed he, “have died like a good-for-naught!
 Thy hands were never bound (like one),
 Thy feet were never touched by fetters;
 Thou hast fallen by the hand of wickedness!”²

But that such a deed should have been possible revealed only too vividly the power of Joab. David could venture to denounce him in his own trusted circle, but dared not even reproach him to his face. “Know,” said he, to

¹ See David's rules for his conduct. Ps. ci. 3, ff. ² 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34.

his private friends, "that a great prince in Israel has fallen to-day, but I am too weak to avenge him, for I am not yet anointed king over the tribes, and the sons of Zeruiah are more powerful than I. May Jehovah repay the doer of this deed according to his wickedness, for I am not able."

The news of Abner's murder had a wide-spread result. For a time Israel withdrew from further relations with one who seemed to have basely murdered a man so much honoured. But this hesitation passed off as the truth became known. To Ishbosheth himself, the death of his great supporter was fatal. Knowing nothing of his treasonable advances to David, he felt only his loss, and sank into listless dejection. Who should now defend the land against the Philistines, or even against David? But the end of his troubles was near. His body guard, like that of his father, was taken from his own tribe of Benjamin. Amongst the Benjamites, however, was numbered the Canaanite population of Beeroth, one of the towns in league with Gibeon, whose citizens Saul had so ruthlessly murdered. Alarmed by the massacre, the people of Beeroth had fled to Gittaim, a place, some have thought, on the Philistine plains. Two of their number, Baanah and Rechab, brothers, had wandered to Mahanaim, and had been enrolled in the body guard of Ishbosheth, against whom they bore a deadly grudge, as a son of the murderer of their kinsmen. This blood feud they now determined to carry out by killing Ishbosheth; feeling sure that David would reward them for doing so. He had winked, as it seemed, at the murder of Abner, and would therefore be pleased with their act. Ishbosheth's palace, apparently, was not unlike some large country houses still found in Palestine, built round the four sides of a hollow square; chamber side by side of

chamber, each with its own door; their roofs of rough stems of trees, over and under which, earth had been stamped hard; huge corn bins, also of earth, leaning against the front walls beneath.¹ The murderers chose the heat of the day, when the king would be taking the rest usual with all at noon, in such a climate. In the Hebrew text they are said to have gone into the inner court on pretence of getting wheat; but in the Greek Bible the account is more circumstantial. The woman that kept the gate of the house, it tells us, had been cleaning wheat, but had fallen asleep, and thus the murderers were able to slip past her,² and enter the king's chamber. There they stabbed him, and having cut off his head took it with them, and fled with all haste to David at Hebron, with their ghastly burden. But he who had ordered the wild Amalekite to be killed for his pretended death-thrust to Saul when already fallen, was not likely to spare men who had slain a king in his bed, in cold blood. "As the Lord liveth," said he, "who has redeemed my soul out of all adversity, without recourse to such deeds, they shall die." A nod to his men around sufficed, and Baanah and Rechab ceased to live. Ordering their hands and feet, the instruments of their guilt and of their flight to Hebron, to be cut off, the dishonoured corpses were forthwith hung up over "the pool in Hebron;" one of the two tanks still existing; probably that at the bottom of the valley, south of the town; a huge reservoir, 130 feet square and 50 deep, solidly built of hewn stones. The head of Ishbosheth was reverently laid in the grave of Abner; a mark of respect than which nothing could be better fitted to gain the hearts of the tribes at large.

¹ Furrer, *Palästina*, p. 114.

² Graetz, Ewald, Thenius, and Wellhausen, adopt this reading.

The only male member of Saul's family now surviving was Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, a boy of twelve,¹ lame of both feet, and otherwise unfit for the throne in such times. The collective tribes had, thus, no choice but to give their adhesion to David, the one man left who could protect and rule the nation. A grand deputation of elders from all Israel waited therefore on him at Hebron, announcing the popular decision; their tribesmen in great numbers attending them.² With a revived sense of national unity, they proclaimed themselves as of "his bone and flesh;" even Benjamin, Saul's own tribe, sending three thousand men to represent it. The joy was universal, for the fame of David was again on all lips. The homage and fidelity to a new monarch shown in modern nations, on the part of public servants, by taking a solemn oath, have been expressed in the East, from the earliest ages, by gifts presented by the population at large to their new ruler. Such offerings, in the simple forms alone possible in a rustic community like Israel, now poured in from every part; even Issachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali contributing freely from the farthest north.³

Vast quantities of the thin, dry bread of the country; loads of meal or flour,⁴ of figs pressed into cakes, and of raisins, arrived on long trains of asses, camels, mules, and oxen; wine and oil, and cattle and sheep in herds and flocks, filled the Hebron valley: at once a demonstration of the unanimous election of David and provision for the usual feast of the Accession, which was held for three days at Hebron, with unprecedented rejoicings. The narrative reminds us of the exciting scenes of early Teutonic history, when the free-men, under the leadership

¹ Eisenlohr says 8 to 10. *Das Volk Israel*, p. 239.

² 1 Chron. xii. 23-37.

³ 1 Chron. xii. 40.

⁴ "And meal" (1 Chron. xii. 40) = things made of flour. *Zunz*.

of their dukes and chiefs, gathered on the plains of the Rhine, and chose as king, through their representatives, the hero they trusted and admired.¹ The men of Israel, with ~~one~~ consent, had assembled, ready armed for war, to "turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of Jehovah."² But liberty had always been dear to the tribes, and securities for its continuance were demanded from their favourite even in this hour of excitement. It was only after he had made an agreement with their elders, like that secured by Samuel from Saul, that he was finally anointed a second time as king.³ He was now in his thirty-eighth year.⁴ His proudest wish was at last realized. From the mere head of a tribe he had become ruler of the whole nation. The old heart-burning between Judah and Ephraim was for the moment forgotten, and the divisions of the past had ended in the zealous union of the entire people. The priesthood and prophets ranged themselves on his side; not, as in the case of Saul, against him. Hitherto he had had with him, in Abiathar, the representative of the younger branch of the house of Aaron—that of Ithamar, Aaron's fourth son, from whom Eli had descended. Now, the tribe of Levi sent 4,600 of its sons to honour him, while Jehoiada, the high priest of the branch of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron, came at the head of 3,700 priests. Benaiah, his son, a famous warrior, had joined David long before, and Zadok, the future high priest under Solomon, did fealty to the new king, with twenty-two chiefs of his father's clan, and, apparently, nine hundred men.⁵ Everywhere "men that had understanding of the

¹ Eisenlohr, *Das Volk Israel*, vol. i. p. 329.

² 1 Chron. xii. 23. ³ 2 Sam. ii. 4; v. 3. ⁴ 1 Sam. v. 4, 5.

⁵ 1 Chron. xii. 26. There were 4,600 of the tribe of Levi, of whom Jehoiada brought 3,700, leaving 900 for Zadok.

times, to know what Israel ought to do," hastened to acknowledge David.¹ He had long enjoyed the presence and counsel of the prophet Gad, but, henceforth, the order had a second representative at his side—the illustrious Nathan. Nor was it a slight matter that the new king chose such men for his habitual guides and advisers.

Nothing could be more propitious than the dawn of the new reign. All the tribes were finally united as a nation; the various parties among them reconciled, and the popular desires in the way of realization. David stood before all, as king by their own choice, and thus the principle had been asserted that the crown of Israel was no mere hereditary appanage of a family, but the gift of the people freely assembled, to him who by his evident fitness showed that he had an inner and higher calling to assume it. Would David keep to his coronation oath? Would he fulfil their expectations? They did not need to wait long to be able to decide respecting this. His genius and statesmanship were seen in his first step.

Hebron in the extreme south was too remote from the centre of the country for a capital. But on the borders of the territories of Benjamin and Judah there was the fastness of Jebus,² till now held by a remnant of the original inhabitants of Canaan, who had given it the name it bore and had taken their own name, the Jebusites, from it. Defying capture for centuries, it had come to be regarded as impregnable. Its position, in fact, was naturally very strong, for it was built on twin hills—afterwards Zion and Moriah—cut off by valleys on three sides from the country round, and fortified strongly on the north, where it was weakest. The Hebrews had

¹ 1 Chron. xii. 32.

² Jebus = trodden under foot—the conquered. Jebusites = the conquerors. *Mühlau und Volck*, p. 322.

once taken it, but had been forced to resign it to its ancient possessors, and to content themselves with living in friendly relations with them. On this spot, David, with a masterly instinct, fixed as his future capital. Having first proposed its peaceable surrender, perhaps in return for payment of money, he received only an insulting refusal. In foolhardy confidence its chiefs even dared him to attack it, boasting that the blind and the lame were enough to keep him out of a place so strong.¹ Such a taunt sealed its fate. An order for its escalade was at once issued; the south side, where the rock was highest and steepest,² being chosen, as the least guarded or fortified. Promising the great reward of the chief command of his forces to him who should take it,³ a storming party clambered up the precipice and overpowered the defenders above, in spite of all opposition;⁴

¹ 2 Sam. v. 8.

² The height, on the south, above the Valley of Hinnom, is 303 feet. On the south-east it is 242 feet; on the east 204 to 159; on the west 95 to 139. *Map of Ordnance Survey*. Lieut. Conder says, however, that the valleys of the Kedron and of Hinnom,—torrent beds, he calls them,—are “about 500 feet below the hills on which Jerusalem is built, and, at their junction, are 650 feet below the watershed.” *Handbook*, p. 329.

³ The word translated “gutter,” in 2 Sam. v. 8, occurs only a second time in the Old Testament, in Ps. xlii. 7, when it is rendered “waterspouts.” A great shaft from the hill of Jerusalem to a covered aqueduct leading from the Fountain of the Virgin has been thought by some to be meant. It is supposed that Joab and his men reached this shaft by wading along the subterranean aqueduct, and having ascended it, burst on the townsmen when least expected, inside the town itself.

⁴ Ewald translates 2 Sam. v. 8, “the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind,” etc., “whoso smiteth the Jebusites, let him hurl down the cliff the blind and the lame, who are hated of David’s soul.”

Joab, the man whom of all others David would willingly have kept back, winning the honours of the attack. The Jebusites were permitted to remain on the eastern hill, Moriah;¹ Zion,² the western, was henceforth the royal residence, and became the City of David. Taught by his own success, however, he took care to build strong defences round the whole city, which Joab repaired throughout.³ Hitherto known as Jebus, the town now received the name of Jerusalem.⁴ A quarter, called, after the famous band of the six hundred, the House or Street of the Mighty Ones,⁵ was set apart for that body, and was occupied by them and their families.

The choice of Jerusalem as his capital was no doubt in part determined by its virtually belonging to Judah, as well as by its strength. David could count on the loyalty of his own tribe, but he knew that Ephraim, its rival, could not be trusted. During the centuries of the Judges it had claimed the first place, with its two dependent tribes, Benjamin and Manasseh; and under both Gideon and Jephthah, though men of its kindred tribe Manasseh, it had resented with fierce jealousy and haughtiness their temporary and hard won supremacy. Seated among the central hills, in the richest part of Palestine, "the blessing had come on the head of Joseph" in Ephraim his representative, and the splendour of its inheritance added to its overbearing pride. In Shechem and Samaria it possessed two sites, either of them worthy of forming the centre of the united land, and both afterwards, successively, the capitals of the Ten Tribes. But

¹ Moriah seems a name given afterwards by the Hebrews. It appears to mean the hill where Jehovah revealed Himself. *Mühlau und Volck.*

² Zion = the dry.

⁴ Jerusalem = Place of Peace.

³ 1 Sam. v. 9. 1 Chron. xi. 8.

Neh. iii. 16.

David wisely preferred the security of Jerusalem. Nor was it long before the wisdom of his choice was apparent, when the secession of Ephraim and the whole north, from his grandson, Rehoboam, left only Judah and part of Benjamin faithful to his house.

In his mountain throne, as Jerusalem might well be called, David had added a city not to the nation alone, but, as it were, to the history of the world. Henceforth his race were to cling to it with a passionate love only deepened by the lapse of time.

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,”

said the exiled Psalmist at Babylon,

“Let my right hand forget her cunning;

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,

If I do not think of thee :

If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”¹

Nor have ages diminished this supreme devotion to their famous capital, for in every synagogue over the world public prayers still rise imploring that Jehovah, in mercy, would return to Jerusalem His own city, and rebuild it for an everlasting glory.² The erection of the Temple drew towards the whole city a religious veneration. To the Psalmist, after the defeat of Sennacherib,³ the thought that God was in the midst of it seemed a pledge that it should never be moved.⁴ “God would help her when the morning dawned.” The spring believed to burst from Moriah, the fancied source of the waters hereafter filling the vast Temple cisterns, was to become a perennial river “whose streams would make glad the city of God; the holy place of the Tabernacle of

¹ Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

² Isaac's *Customs of the Jews*, p. 211.

³ So, Hengstenberg, Ewald, and Hupfeld.

⁴ Ps. xlv. 5.

the Most High.”¹ There was no hill like Zion. Bashan might be a hill of God—high, and of many peaks²—but Zion was that which He had desired, and in which He would dwell for ever. Its elevation above the landscape around endeared it to the race. “Thither the tribes went up.”³ Hebron might be really higher, but it lay in an upland valley and thus the sense of its lofty position was lost. But Jerusalem was approached from at least the east and west by a perpetual ascent, and seemed, when reached, to dominate the whole land. The ravines by which it is surrounded on three sides gave a completeness and connected isolation to all its parts which added to its charms. It was a city that is compact together.⁴ Looking out from its walls it seemed guarded by hills on every side. “The mountains were round about it”—Olivet, close at hand; farther off, Mizpeh; to the north, Gibeon and Ramah; on the south, the ridge towards Bethlehem; away to the east, the purple hills of Moab; everywhere, hills and mountains, higher or lower. Its natural features, its history, and its religious associations united to endear it to the Jew. Even in the first days of its conquest, to love it was held an earnest of good,⁵ and to-day the fondest desire of a godly Israelite is that he may die within its gates, or at least that some of its earth may be sprinkled over his coffin.

The capture of Jerusalem was the beginning of a grander national history. From that moment, David “went on growing great, and the Lord God of Hosts was with him.”⁶ One of his first steps, in addition to

¹ Ps. xlvi. 4.

² Ps. lxxviii. 15, *lit.*

³ Ps. cxxii. 4.

⁴ Ps. cxxii. 3.

⁵ Ps. cxxii. 6.

⁶ 2 Sam. v. 10. The name Lord God of Hosts or Lord of Hosts is unknown in the Pentateuch, Joshua, or Judges. It first occurs in 1 Sam. i. 3, but henceforth marks, by its constant use to the

fortifying the city, was to build a palace worthy of such a capital. Jewish skill, however, was unequal to the task, nor did the country afford the large timber needed. Arrangements were therefore made with Hiram, king of Tyre,¹ to float rafts of cedar-beams down the coast from the forests of Lebanon, and to send masons and carpenters to erect the building. The Phenician ruler had, indeed, sent envoys² to congratulate David on his accession and conquest of Jerusalem, and their visit had probably been utilized to set matters afoot for the construction of the palace. Its successful completion followed in due time, and seemed an additional proof that the kingdom had been firmly established by God.³ Following his policy when first chosen king at Hebron, David further sought to strengthen his position by additional marriages from the chief families of Jerusalem. But though he added to his dignity, according to Eastern ideas, by thus having a royal harem, he was unconsciously laying the foundation of future evils to his house and to the nation.

Among other motives for seeking the friendship of David, Hiram very probably had been anxious to secure his help against the Philistines, who had once before conquered Phenicia, and were still dangerous neigh-

close of the canon, the increased realization of national dependence on Jehovah for defence against all enemies.

¹ Thenius thinks it was Abijah, the father of the Hiram who assisted Solomon in building the Temple. Josephus, quoting Menander of Ephesus, says that Hiram reigned 33 years. But as we find him still alive in the twentieth year of Solomon's reign this would make his accession only 13 years before David's death at the age of seventy, and would require the incident of Bathsheba to have happened when David was a grey old man. It seems better therefore to suppose that Hiram's father is meant.

² 2 Sam. v. 11. *Thenius.*

³ 2 Sam. v. 12.

bours. Such, at least, they soon showed themselves, again, to Israel. Roused by its seizure of the new capital, and alarmed at the possibilities of the future under so warlike a leader, they again attacked the Hebrews with their whole forces.¹ But it was now no longer as it had been when David had no central fortress in which to await them. Shutting himself up in the castle of the city, he gathered round him a strong force, and awaited the fitting moment for action. At last this came. The Philistines had penetrated to the Valley of the Giants, south of the Valley of Hinnom, under the very walls, towards Bethlehem, but David burst upon them, at a place known from the result as Baal Perazim, "the place of defeats,"² in an attack, swift and terrible as that of a mountain flood, and drove them back to the sea-plains in such utter confusion, that they abandoned their idols, which, as usual, they had brought into the field to secure their victory.³ These, as became the king of a theocracy, were not carried off in triumph, to grace the Tabernacle, as the Ark had been borne away to the temple of Dagon, but, in compliance with the requirements of the Law, were contemptuously burned.⁴ A second invasion soon followed, by the same pass, but it also was vigorously repulsed. Making a wide circuit, David suddenly took them in the rear, aided, in doing so, by the cover and rustling of a wood of mulberry trees,⁵

¹ "All the Philistines," 1 Sam. v. 17.

² *Mühlau und Volck*. Weiss thinks Baal Perazim meant originally "Baal of the Valley," and marked an ancient site of Baal worship, but was changed by David to mean "the place of breaches," i.e., the place where he had burst through on his foes like a flood from the hills. See 1 Chron. xiv. 11. *David*, p. 157.

³ 2 Sam. v. 21.

⁴ Deut. vii. 5, 25. 1 Chron. xiv. 12.

The word translated "mulberry trees," is perhaps better rendered aspens, or trembling poplars. So Dr. Royle (Kitto's

which enabled him to fall on them before they knew of his approach. The Valley of Rephaim, or "the giants," had hitherto been famous as a Philistine battle-field,¹ but this crushing defeat at length broke their power. Driving before them their forces, which had moved from Rephaim to Gibeon, north of Jerusalem, Israel pursued them, with fierce slaughter, down the steep passes of Bethhoron, to Gezer, on the edge of the Maritime Plain.² Centuries after, the memory of these battles still remained fresh, for Isaiah speaks of Jehovah rising up as in Mount Perazim, and wroth as in the Valley of Gibeon.³ But, with true humility, as became a theocratic king, David made no claim to these victories as wrought by his own might. Before both, he had consulted the Urim and Thummim, and his warriors stole on to the second, through the mulberry wood, in the firm belief that the murmur of its leaves was the footfall of Jehovah "marching" before them to smite down their enemies.⁴ But repeated conflicts, in which David's heroes were to win their proudest laurels, were still to take place, before so fierce a nation as the Philistines were finally subdued. The battles of Perazim and Gibeon, however, so weakened them that he was ere long able to lay on them the ignominious yoke of tribute they had hitherto imposed on Israel. Gath, the old capital of Achish, and the farthest south of the Philistine cities, passed into his hands with its dependent district and

Cyclo.) and Dr. Tristram. Eisenlohr calls them balsam trees, but the balsam does not grow on the high plateau of Central Palestine, which is too cold for it.

¹ The name Baal Perazim shows this.

² Now Tell Jezer, a large ruin. Conder's *Handbook*, p. 412.

³ Isa. xxviii. 21.

⁴ 2 Sam. v. 25. Going = marching.

villages.¹ Such a conquest, to use the words of the



GATH, LOOKING SOUTH-EAST. *Lieut. Conder, R.E.*

sacred narrative, was no less than “the taking the bridle of their supremacy out of their hands” for ever.²

¹ 1 Chron. xviii. 1.

² 2 Sam. viii. 1. Metheg-ammah = “the bridle of the arm,” *i.e.* the supremacy. *Ewald. Bertheau.* “The bridle of the chief or mother city,” *i.e.* “Gath” (the authority of their capital). *Gesenius. Keil.* A striking remark of Prof. Sayce, respecting the Philistines, may be here quoted. He says, “In the Egyptian inscriptions Phenicia is called Keft, the inhabitants being Kefa; and since Keft-ur or ‘Greater Phenicia’ was the name given to the Delta of the Nile, from the Phenician colonies settled upon it, the Philistines, who came from Caphtor or Keft-ur, must have been of Phenician origin.” Deut. ii. 23. Jer. xlvii. 4. Amos ix. 7. *Bible and the Monuments*, p. 69.



CHAPTER IX.

ORGANIZATION OF THE KINGDOM.

THE development of the new monarchy, thus triumphant against its once formidable enemies—the Philistines—perhaps with the assistance of Tyre, was specially favoured by the circumstances of the times. Egypt, formerly so powerful, had sunk into weakness under the last kings of the Twentieth Dynasty—successors of the great Rameses—and Assyria, which under Tiglath Pileser I.¹ had spread its conquests to Lebanon, and overshadowed all Western Asia, had suffered such a humiliation after his death, that the inscriptions almost cease. All that is known is that Assyria was defeated by the king of Babylon, and also by the (Hittite) king of Syria, and lost great part of its dominions.² There was, therefore, no great power in Western Asia to check

¹ B.C. 1130-1100 (about). Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, p. 293. His name is mentioned in an inscription of Sennacherib in a curious passage. "My soldiers seized the gods which dwelt there (in Babylon), and broke them in pieces, plundering their treasuries. The gods which Merodach-Nadin-Achi, king of Akkad, took from Tiglath Pileser and carried to Babylon, I rescued and brought away, 418 years after, and set them up in their former places!" See also Sayce, *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.* vol. vii. p. 253.

² Birch's *Egypt*, p. 34.

David in his career of victory, or prevent him founding a vast Jewish empire. Under him and Solomon, Israel was destined to take the place afterwards held by the Assyrian kings.

The loyal and intense devotion of David to the theocratic constitution was, meanwhile, strikingly shown by the impulse he gave to the national religion. From the moment of his establishment in Jerusalem he seems to have determined on making it the great religious centre of his kingdom, and to have begun arrangements for a grander ritual and more imposing services in public worship than had hitherto been known. From his reign dates that development of the Old Economy, or at least its fuller establishment, which maintained itself till the overthrow of Jerusalem.¹ Political no less than religious considerations made it desirable that the people should look to the capital as the home of their faith no less than the seat of their king. Arrangements were therefore made to bring the Ark from Kirjath-jearim, on the outskirts of the hills of Judah, where it had remained since its restoration by the Philistines. Having prepared a sumptuous tabernacle or tent for it on Mount Zion, in "the City of David," a great national assembly was summoned, at which all the tribes² were invited to attend its removal to this new sanctuary. The excitement spread over all Israel. "We heard men say at Ephratah,³ in the south of the land, and we found them repeat it in the woody Lebanon," sings the writer of the 132nd Psalm, according to Ewald's

¹ The prevalence of local worship at many centres in Israel, before the final establishment of Jerusalem as the one legitimate "holy place," is strikingly shown in Wellhausen's *Geschichte Israels*, chap. i. It was not indeed till the return from captivity that local worship ceased.

² 1 Chron. xiii. 1, 2.

³ Bethlehem.

rendering,¹ "Let us go into His tabernacle; let us worship at His footstool." The very words of the summons were fitted to rouse the deepest feelings of the nation, for they were to gather at Baalah, of Judah, another name for Kirjath-jearim, to "bring up thence" to the mountain capital "the Ark of God called by The Name; the name of Jehovah of Hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim."² It "had not been enquired at in the days of Saul," but, when restored, the nation would have their great palladium once more in their midst, and could "appear before God in Zion," and be "instructed and taught in the way that they should go." To David the event had an absorbing interest. "He sware unto Jehovah, and vowed to the mighty God of Jacob, that he would not enter his house, or go up into his bed, or sleep, till he had found a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob."³ Such a high festival had never before been held in Israel. Men came to it in multitudes from the torrent Shihor—now the Wady el Arish, 50 miles south of far southern Gath—and from Hamath, in the valley of the Orontes, deep in the upper valley of Lebanon—250 miles, as the crow flies, from Jerusalem. Having been duly set on a new cart,⁴ drawn by oxen, contrary to the Mosaic law, which required that it should be carried "only by consecrated Levites,"⁵ the sacred Ark left the house of Abinadab, on the hill of Kirjath-jearim, where it had been for many years, one of his

¹ *Die Dichter des alt. Bundes*, vol. ii. p. 450. Others understand it as meaning that David first thought of the matter at Bethlehem, and found the Ark at Kirjath-jearim.

² 2 Sam. vi. 2.

³ Ps. cxxxii. 3, 5.

⁴ The Philistines and Phenicians carried their sacred images in carts. 1 Sam. vi. 7. Münter, *Religion der Karthager*, p. 120

⁵ Num. iv. 15. Exod. xxv. 14.

sons, Uzzah, going beside the cart, and another, Ahio, before it.¹ The third son, Eleazar, who had acted as priest in the little sanctuary, is not mentioned. As it moved down the hill, the vast multitude joined in the procession, with the most excited joy; bands of singers mingling their voices with the music of larger and smaller harps, tambourines, castanets, clarions, and cymbals;² no voice or music being louder than those of David himself. Slowly descending the height, they passed safely along the rough track till they came to a spot known as the threshing floor of Nachon, or Chidon. There, the oxen having unfortunately stumbled and shaken the Ark, so as to throw it forward,³ Uzzah, afraid that it would fall, put out his hand to save it. Suddenly he sank dead at its side; by what agency is not mentioned. The 29th Psalm, however, is connected in the Septuagint, by its title, with the removal of the Ark, and as it describes a thunderstorm, his death may possibly have resulted from a stroke of lightning. Dismayed at a catastrophe so clearly coming from the hand of God, and afraid lest it might be an omen of future evil, David forthwith closed the festivities, and caused the Ark to be taken aside to the house of a Levite, Obed-edom, originally from Gath-Rimmon, in Manasseh.

Three months having elapsed, however, with no bad results to its new guardian, but rather an evident blessing, it was resolved that it should no longer remain away from Jerusalem. Warned by the past, every requirement of the Law was now rigidly carried out. Instead of being drawn by oxen, it was to be carried on its staves by Levites, and no one was allowed to come near it till he had previously sanctified himself with the

¹ 2 Sam. vi. 3. *Sept.* ² 2 Sam. vi. 5. 1 Chron. xiii. 9.

³ *Targum.*

utmost care. The preparations throughout were worthy of an event so august as the reception of the emblem of the Divine Presence into the new capital. The chief men of all Israel were summoned, and nearly 1000 of the most eminent priests and Levites, with the flower of the army and its most famous leaders, were appointed to take part in the solemnity. The sacred relic, borne on the shoulders of chosen men, at last moved forward, amidst the shout of assembled thousands, repeating the chants of the wilderness life—nearly 500 years before—“Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered.” “Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest: Thou and the ark of Thy strength.”¹ After advancing six paces a pause was made, while bullocks and rams² were sacrificed, to invoke the Divine favour. Then, the vast procession once more moved on, amidst loud flourishes of trumpets, blown by mighty warriors—Amasai and Benaiah, among others—and the anthems and music of Levitical choirs. The two high priests—Zadok, from Gibeon, and Abiathar, from the palace of David—followed in their gorgeous robes, and behind them came long companies of turbaned priests and Levites in spotless white; the great captains of David’s army in all their splendour; and the heads of each priestly and Levitical house—among others, Heman the grandson of Samuel, Asaph, and Ethan or Jeduthun—men famous as musicians, and so illustrious as sacred poets that psalms ascribed to them appear in the canon.

The dignitaries of the land and their attendants came next—the princes of Judah and Benjamin from the country round Jerusalem, and those of Zebulon and Naphtali from the far north, attended by long companies of their tribes.

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 1; cxxxii. 8.

² 2 Sam. vi. 13. 1 Chron. xv. 26.

men, being particularly noted.¹ All were filled with the spirit of the occasion, but no one more so than David himself. Instead of his kingly mantle he had put on the long white robe of fine linen, especially worn by the high priest,² and over it the priestly ephod, and bore his well-loved harp. As in all similar religious festivities in the East, bands of singers and players moved along with the procession, circling in religious dances as they went, and into these rejoicings, David, accustomed to them in his connection with the schools of the prophets, threw himself with all his heart.³ The Ark advanced like the chariot of a great conqueror, ascending the sacred hill in triumph, to Jerusalem. The long drawn peal of the trumpets echoed among the hills around; the shout as of a victorious host rang through the valleys of Hinnom and of the Kedron. Its entrance into the gates

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 27.

² The Mēil, a long robe, without arms, worn over the universal undergarment, the chētoneth. It was used both by men and women (2 Sam. xiii. 18), especially by the great or rich (Job i. 20; ii. 12); but was peculiar, above all, to kings and their families. 1 Sam. xviii. 4; xxiv. 11. The prophet Samuel, however, wore it. 1 Sam. xv. 27; xxviii. 14. As part of the official dress of the high priest it is mentioned, Exod. xxviii. 31; xxxix. 22. As it was put on under the ephod, it was known, when worn by the high priest, as the "robe of the ephod." I am indebted to Mr. Bull, my very intelligent press-reader, for the following note:—"With the modern Jews it is the custom at the Passover for the master of the house to wear a fine white linen garment—a sort of blouse, which the bride presents to her bridegroom on the wedding-day, and which is never worn by him, but during the commemoration of the Passover, on the Day of Atonement, and when he is laid in his coffin. Is this perhaps a resumption of the priestly right of the head of the household—wearing the ephod—and was it some such claim as this that David intended when he wore the linen ephod?"

³ Ps. lxxviii. 25.

appeared almost that of Jehovah Himself. A formal summons to surrender to Him the city, henceforth His own, lent additional vividness to the scene. The procession had approached the ramparts amidst chants of priests and Levites in alternate choirs, proclaiming the glory of Him who was drawing nigh, and the purity required from all who ascend into His holy hill. Then, as if addressing the warders on the walls, a chorus demanded that the gates be thrown open :—

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Be ye lift up, ye ancient doors :
That the King of Glory may enter in.”

But the warders, hesitating, forthwith answered with responding chant—

“Who is this King of Glory ?”

Then came the reply, in triumphant strains :—

“Jehovah, strong and mighty;
Jehovah, mighty in battle.”

Both choirs, on this, united in a grand chorus, as the gates were thrown wide, and the procession swept through—

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Lift them up, ye ancient doors;
And the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is this King of Glory ?
Jehovah of Hosts,
He is the King of Glory.”¹

Renewed sacrifices, offered by David himself, acting as a priest—marked the entrance of the Ark into the tent prepared for it, and Asaph and his brethren sang a magnificent psalm, composed by David for the occasion;²

¹ Weiss, pp. 184, 185. See Ps. xxiv.

² 1 Chron. xvi. 8-36. This Psalm is repeated in part in Ps. cv. 1-15; xcvi. 1, ff.; cvi. 1, 47, 48; cvii. 1; cxviii. 1; cxxxvi. 1.

the vast multitude responding with a loud Amen, after which David dismissed them with a priestly benediction, though the two high priests were present. But such a day could not end without active and unconstrained bounty to all. Festivities on the most generous scale, and the distribution of bread,¹ flesh, and a raisin cake to the multitude, for whom room was wanting, fitly closed it.

One incident only had clouded the perfect happiness of the day. The fervour David had displayed found no sympathy in Michal, his wife, who could not enter into his feelings of religious enthusiasm. Instead therefore of hailing him joyfully on his return, she could only think of him as having lowered his dignity by the part he had taken in the proceedings. Had he not danced among the common women,² bearing himself thus like one of the low class of men who, alone, did so in public? But his answer was noble. "To be allowed to dance and play before Jehovah, who has chosen me in the stead of thy father and of all his house, to rule over Israel, has been an honour too great for me. As to the maidens of whom you speak, should I seek praise from them? What they think of my act is nothing."³ It was God that had turned his long mourning into dancing; that had put off his black robe of sackcloth and girded him with the white raiment of gladness he had that day worn.⁴ It had been a glory to humble himself in His sight, and he felt himself as unworthy as the humblest citizen to rejoice before Him. On such a day he was far enough from caring for praise or the reverse from his fellow-men! It is added that Michal was childless till her

¹ 2 Sam. vi. 19, for "a flagon of wine," read "a cake of raisins."

² 2 Sam. vi. 20. Handmaidens = slaves.

³ Ewald, *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 174.

⁴ Ps. xxx. 11.

death, as if her pride had been punished by God in the way most painful to a Hebrew woman, by her never having that motherly joy granted to those whom she had despised.

The installation of the Ark at Jerusalem was a great historical event. Henceforth the heathen Jebus was not only Jerusalem, but "the Holy City." The feelings of David respecting it are seen in the Psalms. From this time he would fain make it holy, in fact as well as in name. Those only who had clean hands and a pure heart; who had not lifted up their soul to vanity,¹ nor sworn deceitfully, were in his eyes fit to enter it.² He fondly hoped indeed to form an ideal community worthy of the place in which Jehovah had chosen His dwelling. The 101st Psalm records his desire thus to have round him a people worthy of such a spot. For himself, he says, he would give heed unto the perfect way. He would walk within his house with a perfect heart. The man of froward heart should depart from him: he would not know wickedness. The slanderer and the proud would not be suffered by him. His eyes would be on the faithful of the land, that they might dwell with him, and he would seek those who walked in a perfect way for his servants; deceit and lying he would not endure; they would neither dwell in his house, nor tarry in his sight. No merely ritual or ceremonial religion would content him. Prayer would rise from the midst of this city of God like incense, and the lifting up of the hands would be as the evening sacrifice.³ The priests would be clothed with righteousness, and the saints shout aloud for joy.⁴ The glorious hills of Bashan, the pride of the land, were eclipsed in their charms for ever by Zion, now that it

¹ *Lit.* "a thing of nought."

² Ps. cxli. 2.

³ Ps. xxiv. 3, 4.

⁴ Ps. cxxxii. 9.

was known as "the hill which God desired to dwell in, and in which He would abide for ever and ever."¹ "He had chosen it as His seat."² Even the glories of Sinai were ascribed to it. "The chariots of God were twenty thousand, even thousands twice told. Jehovah is among them; He has come from Sinai into His sanctuary."³ Jerusalem would be the centre of a world-wide glory. Princes would come to it from Egypt to do homage to Jehovah; Ethiopia would soon stretch out her hands to God.⁴

David had now passed from the obscurity of a chief of the tribes, or of a local king such as those around, to the dignity of an Eastern monarch on a far grander scale. With an army like his, and such a capital, the centre of the national religion as well as the seat of political government, he could wield the whole forces of the monarchy at his will. The priesthood were helpless to oppose him, had they wished, now that the Ark was in Jerusalem and themselves, thus, under control. The prophets cordially sympathised with him as the chosen of Samuel, and as thoroughly loyal to their ideas. In the wars which soon broke out he had, therefore, no internal distractions to weaken him, and was able to found an empire which raised Israel for the time to the rank of a great power.

The organization of the kingdom must have been early begun, and perhaps was only gradually perfected. At its head stood David, "the Anointed of the Lord;" sacred in the eyes of his people, as such, though neither deified by them like the Pharaohs nor, like these, inaccessible.⁵ His power was limited by the Constitution drawn

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 16.

² Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14.

³ Dean Perowne.

⁴ Ps. lxxviii. 17. 31.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxiv. 7, 11; xxvi. 11, 16, 23. 2 Sam. i. 16.

up by Samuel, and carefully preserved as the national Magna Charta.¹ It was also tempered by the ancient institution of the "elders" of the people, the "princes" of the tribes,² and the heads of clans, and families. These were confirmed by David in their authority and were destined to survive even the Exile, returning to play a great part in Jewish history down to the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet, within prescribed limits, the throne enjoyed great power, and gathered round itself a dignity hitherto unknown in Israel. David was the "Patriarch" or founder of the dynasty.³ Even the highest personages, on approaching him, including his chosen counsellor, the prophet Nathan, "fell before him, with their face to the ground."⁴ His attendants and courtiers were spoken of as his slaves,⁵ though up to the death of Saul they had been generally known as "young men." In ordinary matters his power was so direct and uncontrolled that "none could turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that he had spoken." He rode on his own royal mule,⁶ known as such. As supreme judge he sat regularly at the gate of the palace to decide the causes brought before him.⁷ Among the officials connected with the court or the royal domains were a keeper of the treasures, in Jerusalem; superintendents of store-houses in the field, in towns, villages, and towers or strongholds, in which the produce of the royal estates was kept; chief overseers of the forced or free labour on arable lands and in the vineyards; keepers of the local

¹ 1 Sam. x. 25. Manner=law. ² 1 Chron. xxvii. 16, ff.

³ Acts ii. 29.

⁴ 1 Kings i. 33 (*Bähr*).

⁵ 2 Sam. vi. 20; xxi. 15. Servants=slaves. But Saul's followers had, also, been known by the same term. 1 Sam. xvi. 17, 18; xxii. 7; xxviii. 7.

⁶ 1 Kings i. 33.

⁷ 2 Sam. xv. 2.

wine vaults or cellars ; overseers of the royal olive and sycomore plantations in the Shephelah, or Maritime Plain, formerly held by the Philistines ; of the stores of oil, and of the herds of cattle, the camels, and the flocks of sheep and goats which grazed on the coast lands of Sharon, or in different parts of the country.¹ The princes were under the charge of a separate governor. A noble—Ahithophel—reputed the most astute man in Israel, was specially known as David's secret counsellor,² and he had also for his constant adviser the court prophet, Nathan. In the Book of Chronicles, court eunuchs are mentioned, but the word had acquired only the meaningless sense of "official" in the age when it was thus used.³ A royal remembrancer brought official business before the king,⁴ and perhaps wrote the annals of the kingdom ; acting thus as the royal scribe⁵ or secretary. The sons of the king and some chosen dignitaries were privy counsellors.⁶

The army, as might have been expected, received David's special care. Its nucleus consisted of the famous 600 who had gathered round him in the days of his persecution by Saul, and had gradually gained the name of the Gibborim, or "mighty ones," by their bravery. A few were of alien birth,⁷ but the great majority were Hebrews.⁸ Faithful to David in his early adversity, they remained immoveably true to him to the end,

¹ The officer or governor of the royal flocks was common in antiquity. Under David each kind of cattle had its own governor, with a large number of men under him.

² 1 Chron. xxvii. 25-33.

³ 1 Chron. xxviii. 1. Officers=eunuchs.

⁴ 2 Sam. viii. 16.

⁵ 2 Sam. viii. 17.

⁶ 2 Sam. viii. 16, 17 ; xx. 23, ff. 1 Chron. xviii. 15, ff ; xxvii. 32, ff.

⁷ 2 Sam. xxiii. 37, 39. 1 Chron. xi. 4.

⁸ 1 Chron. xii. 1, ff.

even through the rebellion of Absalom.¹ At the head of this "Old Guard" stood a band of thirty who had been promoted to the command of their brethren for special valour.² Over each 200, moreover, was a separate officer, and, above all, a commander of the whole 600.³ Besides this corps David formed a distinct body guard, apparently while still at Hebron, enrolling in it, not Hebrews, but men known in our version as the Cherethites and Pelethites,⁴ over whom Benaiah, son of the high priest, a tried veteran, was set. Who they were has been the subject of dispute, some understanding the two names as meaning executioners and couriers; others, as Cretans⁵ and Philistines.⁶ But even in the latter case, the body guard of Eastern kings has always the task of executing the capital sentences of their master, and are also his runners, to convey his wishes to distant parts. Thus Benaiah, as head of this body, put to death with his own hand those condemned for treason at David's death.⁷ It was the same indeed

¹ 2 Sam. xv. 18; xvi. 6. 1 Kings i. 8.

² There were three chief heroes; three second in fame and rank; and thirty of a third dignity. These probably had special badges of honour, like our medals, crosses, etc. It was thus among the Romans. The monumental bas relief of M. C. Lacubo, a tribune of the 18th legion, who fell in the defeat of Varus, shows this: his breast is covered with decorations—wreaths, ■ necklace, and five medals. This monument is now in the University of Bonn.

³ 2 Sam. xxiii. 8. 1 Chron. xi. 10, ff.

⁴ 2 Sam. viii. 18; xx. 23; *lit.* Crethi and Plethi.

⁵ The Cherethites are mentioned as a nation, dwelling apparently on the coast, and hence probably Philistines—Pelethites being perhaps only another name for ■ class or section of that people.

⁶ *Ewald and Bertheau, Gesenius, Thenius and Keil.*

⁷ 1 Kings ii. 25; xxxiv. 46. Gen. xxxvii. 36. Captain of the

in Egypt and in Chaldea, and it is still in Turkey the duty of a similar officer to put to death personally, or see executed, those he is ordered by the Sultan to kill. To have a body guard of foreigners, has, moreover, been a custom with princes in all ages. The Roman emperors had German troops in this relation to them; the Bourbons and the Popes, Swiss; the Caliphs, Turks. The doubtful attitude of Israel before and after Saul's death; and their hesitating and tardy submission, may readily account for David's following a similar course. When, therefore, after he had broken the power of the Philistines and taken Gath their capital, Ittai, a soldier of that city, joined him with a band of his countrymen, he showed his trust in them by placing them next his person. Nor was his confidence misplaced, for they served him as his body guard with unwavering loyalty;¹ Ittai himself showing such parts and fidelity as, in the end, to gain the command of the third division of the army.²

The general force of the kingdom was known as "The Host," and was, in fact, an organized levy of the whole military strength of Israel. It was only called out in sections, however, in case of war, each being liable to a month's service, and having its own commander, selected by David.³ The aggregate muster of the twelve divisions was reckoned at 300,000 men, and thus each month's army would average 25,000. This corps was divided into thousands and hundreds, with their respective officers.

guard=chief of the executioners. Jer. xxxix. 9, 11, 13; xl. 1. Dan. ii. 14, 15 (margin).

¹ 2 Sam. xv. 18. 1 Kings i. 1, 38, 44.

² 2 Sam. xv. 19; xviii. 2.

³ 1 Chron. xxvii. 1-15.

The supreme command had been held under Saul by Abner,¹ who was succeeded in it by Joab after his daring capture of Jerusalem. As generalissimo he had a chief armour-bearer of his own, and ten attendants to carry his equipment and baggage.² The trumpet sound for retreat or advance, formerly given by command of the judge or king, was left to his orders,³ and he was honoured by the high titles of "lord," and "prince of the king's army."⁴ As commander in chief, Joab was, in fact, the first subject after the royal family, and founded a branch of the Jewish nobility,⁵ which survived the Captivity.

The army consisted entirely of infantry, since horses and chariots were still regarded as unworthy of a people for whom Jehovah Himself fought. Rather than adopt them, the Canaanites had been left in possession of the plains where alone they could be used, and Israel had contented itself with seizing the hill country. The sword and the spear were the principal weapons, the former always short, but sometimes two-edged.⁶ Worn from the girdle, as with us, the frightful wound it could give when held in the left hand of a practised swordsman, is seen in the picture of the dying Amasa and his murderer. The victim lies actually disembowelled by a single stroke, "wallowing" in his blood on the roadway; Joab standing over him, bespattered from his girdle to his shoes with the blood that had spouted from the gash.⁷ Of spears the most formidable was the long and heavy weapon which Saul always carried about with him. It was stuck into the ground by his tent, during the night, when he was on an expedition, or held in his hand when

¹ 1 Sam. xiv. 51. ² 2 Sam. xxiii. 37. ³ 2 Sam. xviii. 16.

⁴ 2 Sam. xi. 11. 1 Chron. xxvii. 34. ⁵ Neh. vii. 11.

⁶ 2 Sam. ii. 16; xviii. 14. Exod. xxxii. 27. Num. xxv. 7.

⁷ 1 Kings ii. 5.

mustering his forces, and it was on this he is leaning heavily when we catch our last glimpse of his stately figure on mount Gilboa.¹ The fury of his madness may be better realized by the fact that it was this terrible weapon, not the lighter javelin, which he hurled at David² and Jonathan.³ Its weight and power are seen in its mere back-thrust by a strong arm being enough to drive the point of its butt end, used to fix it on the ground, through the body of Asahel.⁴ A lighter spear also in use, for distant throwing, was carried slung across the back, and a third is mentioned without details of its characteristics.⁵ Maces, sometimes of iron, seem to have been used by the chiefs; the rod of iron with which the Messiah is to dash His enemies in pieces seeming to point to such a weapon.⁶ Bows, arrows, and slings were the only other arms in the Hebrew army, so far as we know, and in the use of these the Benjamites alone were famed for special skill.⁷ Defensive armour, except the shield, is hardly mentioned. Here and there among the very highest in rank there might be "a coat of mail," like that of Goliath, or a quilted doublet,⁸ or greaves for the legs, or a helmet; but they were very rare.⁹ A large shield, screening the whole person, was carried by ■

¹ 1 Sam. xxv. 7, 8, 11, 12, 16, 22; xxii. 6. 2 Sam. i. 6.

² By casting a spear at David, Saul virtually absolved him from his allegiance. By the customs of ancient Asia, to throw a dart at a free man, who escaped from it by flight, was equivalent to the dissolution of all obligations of fealty towards him who threw it. *Col. Hamilton Smith. Arms, Kitto's Cyclo.*

³ 1 Sam. xviii. 10, 11; xix. 9, 10; xx. 3.

⁴ 2 Sam. ii. 23. See page 193.

⁵ The Chamith, the Cidôn, and the Romach.

⁶ Ps. ii. 9.

⁷ 1 Chron. xii. 2.

⁸ Exod. xxviii. 32; xxix. 23.

⁹ This is seen from the words for them occurring so seldom.

bearer before the chieftain when in the field; but the smaller "buckler," borne on the left arm, was used by the soldiery at large.

Compared with the troops of the neighbouring states, those of Israel were thus very rude. Armed only with bows and arrows or slings, and swords or spears, and consisting solely of unprotected infantry, they had to meet forces strong in cavalry and chariots, and warriors clad in mail. But under the command of such a leader as David, full of the religious enthusiasm of Joshua and Gideon, they caught a measure of his spirit, and fought with a bravery which bore down all opposition. Their wars were once more, in their opinion, "holy," and they themselves the warriors of Jehovah.¹ The Psalms are coloured with this feeling throughout. Lower or common aims were forgotten. Their enemies were the enemies of God, and He fought on their side against them. The Israelites were His subjects, living in the land over which He reigned as the invisible King; and with Him as their Helper, victory was certain. Like the Swedes under Gustavus Adolphus, or the Puritans under Cromwell, or the Arabs in their first religious fervour, the very belief that they were the soldiers of God made them indifferent to life, and unconquerable in their fiery zeal.²

It was the profound conviction of David that he had been "taken from the sheepfolds, and from following the ewes great with young," to feed Jacob, God's people, and Israel, His inheritance,³ as an under shepherd directly responsible to their Divine Lord, and knowing only His will with the flock. As ruler, he was only the "slave"⁴

¹ Num. xxiii. 21. Isa. xiii. 13. Jer. li. 27.

² This is well shown in Eisenlohr's *Das Volk Israel*, vol. i. p. 100.

³ Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71.

⁴ *Lit.* "slave."

of Jehovah. He was thus prepared to be a king after God's own heart; that is, to administer the government as that of a theocracy, in which he was simply the representative of the Divine Sovereign. His first step marked the spirit of his whole reign. Jerusalem, by the removal of the Ark to it, had become the religious as well as the political capital. From this centre a victorious kingdom of God could be established among men on the basis of the Law of Sinai. It was necessary, however, to organize it afresh, for not even the tribe of Levi, whose care it especially was to superintend public worship, had kept themselves clear from the corruption of the days of the Judges. Samuel had doubtless done much to restore its purity; but the massacre of the priests by Saul at Nob, had brought back the old confusion, amidst which so little interest had been taken respecting the Ark, that it was virtually forgotten.¹ But this state of things ended with its triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. As he never hid his early obscurity, but gloried in his elevation to the throne from a lowly calling, David did not shrink from the open acknowledgment of his religious obligations and convictions. Two prophets, as we have seen, appear as his constant advisers; Gad, his companion in the wilderness; and Nathan, whom we meet after the removal of the capital to Jerusalem. The heads of the two rival branches of the priesthood²—Zadok, who having joined him after the death of Saul, was afterwards, as the supporter of Solomon, raised to the headship of the family of Aaron; with Abiathar, the descendant of Eli, and David's companion when an outlaw—were personally recognised and confirmed as high priests; the former, with those of his line, at Gibeon, where the old Taber-

¹ 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

² The descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar respectively.

nacle of the wilderness still stood, and the altar of burnt offering;¹ the other, with his son Ahimelech, at the new tabernacle on Mount Zion, the resting-place of the Ark. Gibeon, however, remained the spot on which the legal sacrifices were offered.² From the chiefs of the Levite septs six were chosen, with their clans, to assist the priests—four from the branch of Kohath, the son of Levi, and one each from the branches of Gershom and Merari, his other sons. Himself an enthusiast in music, looking to Samuel, the introducer of vocal and instrumental music in religious services, as his spiritual father, David developed the choral service in public worship to an extent hitherto unknown. Gershomites were appointed to sing and play at the Tabernacle at Jerusalem, under the superintendence of Asaph, himself a great musical composer, the author of various psalms, and in after times celebrated as a seer or prophet.³ Kohathites and Merarites discharged the same duties at Gibeon, under the leadership of Heman and Ethan, or Jeduthun. Of these the former, as has been noticed, was a grandson of Samuel, and was known as “the singer,” or musician, but also, like Asaph, as a seer; indeed as “the king’s seer in the matters of God.”⁴ Ethan, or rather, Jeduthun, similarly, was known as “the king’s seer.”⁵ Thus all three superintendents of the tabernacle music ranked as prophets, doubtless, in part, from the identification of music and the singing of sacred lyrics with the characteristics of the choirs of the prophetic communities. Other Levite offi-

¹ 1 Chron. xxi. 29.

² 1 Chron. xxi. 29.

³ Psalms l. and lxxiii. to lxxxiii. are attributed to him, but Vaihinger thinks that only the 50th, 73rd, and 77th are his, the others being of a later date. See notices of him in 2 Chron. xxix. 30. Neh. xii. 46.

⁴ 1 Chron. xxv. 5.

⁵ 2 Chron. xxxv. 15.

cials guarded the gates and the sacred treasures amassed from private gifts, or spoils won in battles, and dedicated to the service of God's house.¹

But this organization was reckoned by David only imperfect and provisional. It seems as if from the first he had wished to build a magnificent temple like those of other countries round, as the centre of the national religion. He was dissuaded from doing so, however, by the prophet Nathan, and finally gave up the idea, on learning that it would not be acceptable to God, to have a house built for Him by one who had shed so much blood in war.² The keen spiritual insight of the prophet doubtless foresaw the injurious results likely to follow the introduction of a splendid temple service, diverting the popular mind from the essential to the outward and ritual. It seems clear, moreover, that the proposal was not so popular as David expected. It might grieve him that he dwelt in a house of cedar while the Ark of the Lord was under curtains, but he was reminded by Nathan that God had always lived in a tent, both in the wilderness and since, and had never commanded any one to build Him a house.³ The strong conservatism of the nation appears to have shrunk from any change in the institutions of Moses, or such an imitation of the customs of the heathen as a temple implied, nor was this popular aversion to the idea overcome till after David's death. The king's disappointment, however, was softened by Nathan's announcement that though he could not build a house for God, God would build a house for him, that is, by a play on the word, would establish the throne to his descendants. Moreover, if he sinned, he would not be rejected as

¹ 1 Chron. xxvi. 20-28. See ver. 27.

² 1 Chron. xxii. 8.

³ 1 Chron. xvii. 1-6. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1831, p. 311; 1832, p. 403.

Saul had been, but chastened in love and tenderness. The lyric in which David thanks the Eternal for such surpassing mercies is fortunately preserved. This incident, and the Psalm thus springing from it, are momentous in the history of Israel as the special ground in after ages of the vivid Messianic hopes of the nation. God had confirmed to Himself His people Israel, to be a people to Him, and had become their God and had promised to establish the house of David for ever.¹ Its founder doubtless pictured to himself an unfading kingdom of God amongst men, and when, in after ages, the spiritual blessings enjoyed by Israel were more and more traced back to Him, the hopes of the future were also associated with his house. A great descendant was to rise as the Messiah, who should realize all the visions of Jewish glory which the nation built on the promises now given.

Though thus hindered from gratifying his cherished desire of building a temple, David, in preparation for its erection by Solomon, continued to organize and develop the priestly and musical services. The priesthood was divided into twenty-four courses, of which sixteen represented the House of Eleazar, and eight that of Ithamar: Zadok remaining over the former and Abiathar over the latter. Each course was under a head, and ministered week by week in an order determined by lot. The Levites also were similarly arranged in twenty-four divisions, each of 2,000, to assist the priests at sacrifices and to render other services in connection with public worship. No fewer than 4,000, similarly divided into twenty-four courses, were set apart as singers and musicians, under leaders and music masters, and 4,000 as watchers of the gates and doors of the sanctuary. Six thousand were also appointed to enforce due obedience

¹ 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16, 24, 25, 29.

on the part of the people at large to all theocratic requirements; to act indeed with authority in all matters pertaining to God and the king, as civil and ecclesiastical magistrates.¹

The organization thus created proved so admirably adapted for its object that it remained unchanged till the final downfall of the State. In discipline and zeal its members formed a spiritual army, not inferior, for the support of the religious life of the kingdom, to the host entrusted with the maintenance of its political and external strength. Both, indeed, were lasting memorials to the practical genius of David.

But the mere appointment of priestly or Levitical companies for the various services of the Tabernacle did not content one so sincere in his religious feelings. Music and poetry were the very breath of his being, but both, from his early youth, had caught the devotional colour of his mind. Some of his Psalms, as we have seen, carry us back to his shepherd life on the Bethlehem hills, and not a few mark the vicissitudes of his perilous years when an outlaw. Himself raised to a higher religious fervour by his Psalms, expressed in song and music, he instinctively felt that similar influences promised the best results on the spiritual life of the nation. To this we are indebted for the Psalter which, though ultimately comprising the inspired hymns of later ages, was at first a collection of sacred lyrics composed by David and his illustrious brethren connected with the Tabernacle choirs. It is impossible, after so many ages, to decide with certainty in every case as to the date or authorship of all the compositions it now includes, but respecting not a few there can be little reasonable doubt. The 24th Psalm bears in its language the evidence of having been composed, as has

¹ 1 Chron. xxiii. 3, ff; xxiv.-xxvi.

been noticed, for the entrance of the Ark into Jerusalem, and the one inserted in 1 Chron. xvi. 8-36, is expressly stated to have been delivered by David on the same great day "into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord." Others, written on earlier occasions, would naturally be added to these, and they would be supplemented, from time to time, by fresh compositions. More than fifty Psalms bear the inscription "for the chief musician," marking them as officially designated for use by the various choirs of Levites in public worship. Of these, thirty-nine are ascribed to David, nine to the famous minstrels of the Korahite clan, and five to Asaph; only two, the 66th and 67th, being anonymous. Possibly less varied at first while the Psalms were fewer in number, each week-day service had ultimately, as it would seem, its own Psalm.¹

Amidst all the cares of empire, indeed, David was still pre-eminently the sacred poet and musician. Singing men and women celebrated his victories and charmed his quiet hours in his own house.² Bands of Levites, already well trained by Chenaniah, their chief, had escorted the Ark to Zion, amidst songs, and the strains of psalteries, harps, and cymbals. The 4,000 members of the Tabernacle choirs, divided into twenty-four separate bodies under distinct heads, and led by 300 specially skilled singers and players, sang to the accompaniment of instruments invented or improved by David himself.³ A chant composed by him was known for ages by his name, and was sung by the Levites before the army of Jehoshaphat; then, centuries later, on laying the foundation of the second temple; and again by the army of

¹ Delitzsch, *Bibl. Com. über die Psalmen*, p. 23.

² 2 Sam. xix. 35.

³ 1 Chron. xxiii. 5.

the Maccabees after their great victory over Gorgias.¹ Wind instruments² mingled with the clash of cymbals and the murmur of harps, and high over all rose the voices of the singers. Women and children were not, it would seem, excluded from the sacred choirs, for the fourteen sons and three daughters of Heman are said to have "all been under the hands of their father for song in the house of the Lord."³ It is a disputed question whether the music was played and sung in harmony of parts, or as simple melody. Some of the terms used in connection with it have been thought to imply the former; Alamothe being understood as meaning soprano, and Sheminith, bass.⁴ But there is much probability in the opinion that, at least as a rule, the music and singing were similar to the Gregorian chants, which may have been formed on the basis of the old Temple music; for the early Christian Church long retained a sympathy with the institutions of Judaism, and in fact, at first, sprang from their midst. The service appears to have opened with a prelude of the larger and deeper sounding harps,⁵ after which mingled vocal and instrumental music discoursed, till a "rest," marked as *Selah*, was reached. The congregation bowed or prostrated itself at this pause; the instruments, alone, meanwhile, playing a brief interlude till the full choir once more began.⁶ To the worshippers as a whole was left the utterance of a solemn Amen or Hallelujah, or short response, at prescribed places in the service.

It is difficult to realize a character so various as that

¹ 1 Chron. xvi. 34, 41. 2 Chron. vii. 6; xx. 21. Ezra iii. 10, 11.
1 Macc. iv. 24.

² Ps. lxxviii. 25.

³ 1 Chron. xxv. 5, 6; see also Ps. lxxviii. 25.

⁴ 1 Chron. xv. 20, 21. *Gesenius. Weiss. Keil.*

⁵ *Weiss*, on 1 Chron. xv. 21. ⁶ *Hitzig, Die Psalmen*, vol. i. p. 15.

of David. His military genius, as shown by the organization of his army, and by his wide conquests, presents him, in one aspect, as pre-eminently a soldier. His prudence in his early years; his dexterous management of men during the troublous period of his exile, and his able government of a great empire in after years, show all the qualities of a statesman. His Psalms and musical gifts reveal a born poet, of high sensibility and refinement of nature. But he was, above all, the open and avowed servant of God. Prophets, as we have seen, were his constant and intimate advisers; the organization of public worship on a scale of grandeur before unknown in Israel, occupied for a time his whole heart; the building of a great temple to Jehovah was his lifelong ambition. As the expression of his inmost being, his Psalms point to the tone of his habitual life and thought. He counted it his glory to join, like a common man, in the religious dances before the Ark, and played with his own hand, as he sang, in the crowd, while the sacred relic advanced to Mount Zion. Nor did he hesitate to take public part in the most demonstrative act of the Tabernacle worship. Singing aloud and praising God, he joined in the religious processions which "compassed the altar," while the priests ministered, and the great crowd of worshippers stood around.¹ Besides all, though not even a Levite, so completely did he identify himself with religion, that we see him bearing himself frequently as a priest; wearing the priestly dress, offering sacrifice, and giving the priestly benediction. The title of priests indeed was given to his sons,² and even his military officers were in various

¹ See Ps. xxvi. 5, ff. The above is the sense assumed by Ewald and Lengerke—religious dances round the altar.

² 2 Sam. viii. 18; *Heb.*

ways associated in this unusual alliance. Benaiah, the captain of his body guard was at once a priest and one of the leaders of the choirs, and the captains of the host were associated in the arrangement of the musical service.¹ Such an identification of Church and State may have been often imagined, but it perhaps was never realized before or since, in ancient or modern times.

¹ 1 Chron. xxv. 1. It is to be noticed that the chief singers and musicians are said to "*prophecy* on the harp," etc., that is, their singing and playing was similar to those of the sons of the prophets. Mere public worship is thus called *prophesying* by Elizabethan authors.





CHAPTER X.

THE WARS OF DAVID.

THE resolutions with which David had entered on his reign were fitted to endear him to all. An Oriental king, whose ideal was "to walk before God with a perfect heart;" to surround himself with the best of the land and make Jerusalem, what after generations pictured it as really becoming under his sceptre, "the faithful city, full of justice, a city in which righteousness had its abode,"¹ could not fail to attract to himself an unequalled enthusiasm. He was clearly no despot like neighbouring kings. A sense of responsibility to God as his representative marked his conduct. To carry out the high principles of the sacred law in public and private, and make them in all respects the code of the nation, was his great aim; though failures or misconceptions, in some cases, were no doubt inevitable.

His treatment of the surviving members of the house of Saul would assuredly have illustrated this lofty tone, but for an incident over which he appears to have had no control. For three years rain had not fallen in sufficient quantity to secure a good harvest, and famine was pressing sore on the people. In this extremity David consulted the oracle, and was told that the drought was sent

¹ Isa. i. 21.

because blood rested on Saul and his house¹ for his massacre of the Gibeonites. How this answer was given we do not know, and are left to doubt whether those who announced it had not attributed their own conceptions, erroneously, to God. Nothing however remained to the king but to summon the Gibeonites, and ask them what ransom in money they would accept to satisfy their feud, and remove the guilt from the nation. But, true to the Arab law of blood revenge, nothing save blood would content them. As, however, they dared not kill any of Saul's house, their demand could only be satisfied by David's inflicting the death penalty. The feeling of the ancient Hebrews on this point may be best gathered from that of the Bedouins of the present day, among whom primitive Semitic customs have continued unweakened by time. The right of the avenger extends among them to the most distant relations of the murdered person, and may be carried out on the remotest connections of the murderer. A whole tribe indeed regards itself as bound to retaliate on the slayer of any one of its members. Atonement is often made by money, but is regarded as discreditable. So inexorable was the custom among the Israelites, that even the only son of a widow could not hope to be spared, if he chanced to be the next relative to a homicide.² In the law of Moses, blood revenge was sanctioned, with fixed limitations. Fathers were not to be put to death for the sins of their children, nor children for those of their fathers; every man was to be put to death for his own sin.³ But this humane limitation in the Law, had failed to suppress the terrible customs which they inherited from their Bedouin ancestry. With them,

¹ 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

² 2 Sam. xiv. 7.

³ Exod. xxi. 12. Num. xxxv. 19, 21. Lev. xxiv. 17. Deut. xxiv. 16; see 2 Kings xiv. 6.

as in the East generally, the clan feeling regarded all connections of the murderer, however distant, as forming one family, on any member of which revenge could be taken. This, rather than the merciful restraints of the Law, had become their practice. Saul had not only shed the blood of the Gibeonites, but had broken the solemn oath sworn to them by Joshua, and such an offence, in the public opinion of the times, could only be atoned by blood; even that of the children being demanded for the sin of the father, if no other could be had. By the letter of the Law David was not bound to give up Saul's descendants; but inexorable custom had on this point become paramount, and in reality left him no choice. When, therefore, seven victims were demanded from Saul's house, he could only, with the deepest regret, comply. Two sons of Rizpah, Saul's concubine—whom Abner, perhaps, had married—and five sons of Merab, Saul's eldest daughter, were given up as the sacrifice, and after being put to death, were impaled beside the altar on the hill top of Gibeah, Saul's own village. The catastrophe happened in April, at the beginning of the barley harvest, but the bodies—"hung up before the Lord," as if to show that an atonement had been offered for the blood shed at Gibeon—were wetted by no shower till the end of October or the beginning of November, when the early rains always fall. All these months, however, they had served to draw forth an unspeakably touching instance of maternal love. Through the fierce days of summer and early autumn, when no cloud tempers the overpowering heat, Rizpah, having spread sackcloth on the bare hill top, beneath the corpses of her sons, watched them as they hung, braving the sun by day and the cold by night, to guard them from jackals and vultures, and to bury the bleached bones when

permitted; for to leave a body unburied was regarded by all ancient nations as the greatest wrong to the dead. But the autumn rain came at last, and being taken as a proof that the ghastly atonement was accepted, the bodies were allowed to be removed. As a poor mitigation of a grief so sad, the bones were ordered by David to be gathered for honourable interment, and were laid, along with those of Saul and Jonathan, in the family tomb of Kish, at Zelah, in Benjamin.

David's constant loyalty and magnanimity to Saul himself, under the greatest provocation, leaves no room for any suspicion of unworthy motives in this disaster to his house. It was forced on him by the spirit of the age, which he could not oppose. Probably, indeed, like his contemporaries, he believed in the necessity for the sacrifice. False conceptions of the character of God, and erroneous ideas as to natural phenomena, had created a dark and hateful superstition which controlled even the most religious minds of the age. Contrary even to the letter of Mosaism, it was held that the sin of the father must be visited by man on the children, to appease the Divine wrath. But how much that was heathen in its spirit long held its place in Christianity? It is not yet 200 years since a victim was burnt alive for witchcraft in England:¹ nor 160 years since the same scene disgraced Scotland, and in Posen a witch was burnt so lately as 1793.

The only survivor of the family of the first king was now Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, but so terrified was he at the fate of his house, that his retreat was only ascertained by David from an old slave of Saul, who, apparently by doubtful means, had acquired property since the defeat of Gilboa; owning personally no fewer

¹ 1682.

than twenty slaves. The fallen prince lived, it seemed, at Lodebar, not far from Mahanaim, among the mountains of Gilead. Thence David brought him, and having restored to him the private lands of his father, which appear to have lain near Jerusalem, appointed Zeba, with his slaves, and his household of fifteen sons, to superintend them, and pay over to him the income they yielded. Mephibosheth himself had apartments given him in the palace and ate at the royal table. Helplessly crippled, and wholly dependent on the favour of David, his deformity and the misfortunes of his race seem to have broken his spirit. The son of one whose agility had been like that of the gazelle on the hills, he never forgets that he is a poor lame slave,¹ unable to walk; a dead dog;² the last survivor of his father's house;³ and regards the king who had spared his life as an angel of God.⁴ It is pleasant to know that the race of Jonathan did not die with him. He already had a son, Micha, when he came to Jerusalem. Through him the family rose to a numerous posterity, noted for their many sons and grandchildren;⁵ one of them, in the eleventh generation, boasting of sons famous as "mighty men of valour, archers," like their ancestor Jonathan. The race of Saul must, therefore, have been prominent even after the exile.

The first twenty years of David's reign seem to have passed in comparative peace. Local wars with the Philistines, indeed, broke out from time to time, but their power had been crippled at the two great battles of Mount Perazim and the Valley of Gibeon.⁶ Since the capture of Gath, tribute had been imposed on them, but it was long before they quietly submitted to such a

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 26.² 2 Sam. xix. 28.³ 1 Chron. viii. 35-40; ix. 40-44.² 2 Sam. ix. 8.⁴ 2 Sam. xix. 27.⁶ Isa. xxviii. 21.

reversal of their position towards Israel. It was, apparently, in the frays and forays of these years that David's famous heroes won their greatest honours, and it was in one of them that he himself encountered the greatest peril of life he ever ran. Faint with the battle, he had been attacked by a huge Philistine warrior, and was like to be overpowered, when Abishai came to his rescue and killed his assailant. Henceforth his men would not let him fight in the front ranks lest, as they said, with fond endearment, the "Light of Israel" should be quenched.¹

Wars, however, destined to extend David's kingdom to an empire, now began on a great scale.² The first was with Moab; a people with whom, as we have seen, he was connected by blood through Ruth, and towards whom he had been so friendly as to make their country

¹ 2 Sam. xxi. 15-18.

² The note of Graetz justifying his belief that these wars broke out twenty years, at least, after David's accession, is as follows:—"They are to be assigned to the second half of David's reign. For Solomon, who was young at his accession—at most twenty—was born after the Ammonite war. He seems to have been born in the same year as Bathsheba's elder child died (2 Sam. xii. 24). In any case hardly twenty years intervened between the incident of Bathsheba and David's death. Amnon's bad conduct happened not long after his father's fall and the close of the Ammonite-Syrian wars (2 Sam. xiii. 1). Amnon as the eldest son must have been grown up to manhood, since he was born at Hebron, and Absalom is spoken of as a young man. They must, at any rate, have been fully 20, and consequently David must have reigned at least as long when Amnon sinned. Eleven years passed between the death of Amnon and that of Absalom. Two years were spent in cherishing revenge; Absalom lived three years in exile at Geshur; two years were spent in disgrace at Jerusalem; and he rebelled four years after this. These eleven years fall in the second half of David's reign, so that Absalom's rebellion must have happened only a few years before his father's death." *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 251.

at one time his refuge from Saul, and the place of safety for his parents. The cause of hostility is not stated, but Jewish tradition asserts that it was the murder of David's father and mother by the Moabitish king.¹ More probably the Moabites had attacked the Transjordanic tribes, inflicting on them such terrible cruelties as those practised by their neighbours the people of Ammon in similar cases;² conduct which would bring David promptly to the rescue of the invaded territory. It must, at least, from some cause have been regarded as a war of revenge, for David treated them, when vanquished, with sternness remarkable in the light of the friendly past. Making the prisoners lie close together on the ground, the space they occupied was measured, and only those on a "full" third of it were spared. The whole country, moreover, was laid under tribute, which was ordered to be paid yearly at Jerusalem.³ Yet this severity must not be laid to the sole charge of David, as marking him out for special reprobation. The law of Moses had enjoined that if a city yielded when summoned, the lives of the inhabitants were to be spared, tribute being imposed on the community. If, however, it resisted, "every male" was to be put to death; the women and children led off as slaves; the place sacked, and its cattle and all the plunder shared among the conquerors.⁴ In sparing a "full" third of the men taken, David, therefore, leaned to the side of mercy, according to the usage sanctioned even by the Law; nor is there any hint that he reduced the women or children, or the survivors of the men, to slavery. We must, in fact, guard against transferring to a remote age the tenderness towards the vanquished that has very gradually obtained a footing

¹ *Talmud, Tract. Sanhedrin*, p. 39 b. ² See Amos i. 13.

³ 2 Sam. viii. 2.

⁴ Deut. xx. 10, ff.

in modern warfare. Meanwhile, the army brought back a rich booty, part of which, in silver and gold,¹ David dedicated to God. As the war was "His" the spoils rightly belonged to Him.

This war with Moab unfortunately drew others, much more severe, in its train. The kingdom of Ammon, lying to the north, between the Arnon and the Jabbok, had hitherto been friendly with David, perhaps from its dislike of Saul, who had worsted its army at Jabesh Gilead in the early part of his reign. Nahash—"the serpent"—its king, had shown him favour for a time during his troubles: according to Jewish tradition in protecting one of his brothers, the only survivor of the massacre of his family by the treacherous ruler of Moab. Nahash having died, David sent an embassy of condolence to Hanun his son at Rabbah Ammon, the capital; an act of courtesy which seemed little likely to lead to the results that followed.² Alarmed at the subjugation of Moab, Hanun saw in the messengers from Jerusalem only spies, and was so unwise as to insult them and their master grossly. Seizing them, he caused one-half of their beards to be shaved away,³ and their robes to be cut short at their girdle, and in this plight turned them out

¹ 2 Sam. viii. 12.

² *Dict. of Bible. Nahash.* Thenius (*Kurzgef. H. Buch*) says, the truth may be that David may have consoled with Hanun on the death of his father, or congratulated him on his own accession to the throne.

³ See Isa. vii. 20; 1. 6. Ezek. v. 1. Gesenius (*Iesaia*, vol. i. p. 320) quotes authorities to show that even among the Arabs of to-day, to cut off the beard is thought a greater disgrace than to cut off the nose. Among the Jews none but the priests wore drawers or trousers, so that their persons were exposed when their robes were cut short: a dreadful affront in the East even now. *Thenius.*

of the country. Ashamed to return thus dishonoured, they would not go up to Jerusalem, but having sent word of their treatment to David, remained for the time at Jericho. Such an outrage on royal messengers, whose persons were always sacred, left no choice but war. The army was set in motion, including the 600 Gibborim or "heroes," and apparently, also, the mercenary troops of the body guard, the Crethi and Plethi,¹ under the famous priest-warrior Benaiah. Alarmed at the prospect of an invasion by the conquerors of Moab, Hanun forthwith hired large bodies of troops from the different Syrian or Aramean kings between Lebanon and the Euphrates. The petty kingdom of Rehob in the north, near Laish or Dan, and thus west of the Jordan, sent some: Hadad-ezer, ruler of Zobah, a kingdom stretching apparently from the eastern slopes of Lebanon, from near Hamath² on the west, to the Euphrates, sent 20,000 footmen, besides chariots and cavalry;³ the king of Maacah, the district east of Bashan and the Lejah, contributed 1,000 men, and the community of Tob, another small kingdom of Aram, furnished 12,000. A thousand talents of silver⁴ were expended by Ammon in the hire of these mercenaries.

David did not himself take the field, but entrusted the sole command to Joab, who proved well worthy of such confidence. Crossing the Jordan, he found the Ammonite army encamped near their capital, and that of the Aramean mercenaries posted at different parts towards Medeba,⁵ a city on the main line of road, about 25 miles to the south.⁶ Swiftly marching between the

¹ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 252.

² 2 Sam. x. 1-7.

³ 2 Sam. x. 6. 1 Chron. xxi. 6.

⁴ A talent of silver = 660,000 grains = 114½ lbs. Troy.

⁵ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 252.

⁶ 2 Sam. viii. 9.

two armies, he divided his force so that one half faced south and the other north, and gave the command of the latter corps to Abishai, his brother, retaining for himself that of the former, which included the flower of the army. In a brief soldierlike address he now inflamed the minds of his men for battle. "Be of good courage," said he, "and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good."¹ Fired with the belief that they were fighting for Jehovah, and had His aid, the Israelites rushed on their foes and scattered them in precipitate flight; a result so alarming to the northern army, that they also hastily fled before Abishai, into Rabbah Ammon, to have the protection of its walls.² It had been a great day, and might well give confidence for the future. Leaving his brother to prosecute the siege of the capital, Joab hastened to Jerusalem with news of his victory, and to prepare for another campaign. The Aramean kings, though defeated, were not yet crushed, and would doubtless soon resume hostilities on a still greater scale.

The whole military strength of Israel was therefore called out, and led over the Jordan by David himself, when the next season opened. Nor were such great preparations unneeded, for Hadadezer had collected from all parts of Aram, including Mesopotamia, a fresh and much larger army than the one he had lost, and had launched it against Israel, under the command of his chief warrior, Shobach. A great battle was presently fought near Helam, a town now unknown, and the Hebrews gained a second victory; Shobach himself being among the slain.³ The vassals of Hadadezer forthwith hastened to make peace with the conqueror and transfer their

¹ 1 Chron. xix. 13. 2 Sam. x. 12.

² 2 Sam. x. 8-14. 1 Chron. xix. 15.

³ 2 Sam. x. 18.

allegiance to him, and thus at a stroke the kingdoms of Rehob, Maachah, and Tob, passed under the rule of David. Hadadezer himself was pursued to the Euphrates,¹ and defeated at his capital, Thapsacus.² A thousand chariots, seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand infantry prisoners fell into the hands of the victors; but with the grand national disdain of any force but infantry, they destroyed all the horses, except enough for a hundred chariots. The towns and cities yielded immense plunder, including a thousand shields overlaid with gold, the arms of Hadadezer's guard, and "exceeding much brass," or rather copper, afterwards used by Solomon in making the brazen sea, the pillars and the vessels of the Temple.³ The wide territories of Zobah thus became part of the Hebrew dominions.⁴

The Aramean king of Damascus, who had supported Hadadezer, was involved in the same ruin, that city and its territory likewise passing into David's hands, and being held, like the rest of the vast conquered regions, by Hebrew garrisons.⁵ Between the Euphrates and Lebanon, officials from Jerusalem levied tribute for the new Jewish empire.⁶ The promise given, ages before, to Abraham, was at last fulfilled, for his descendants now held the whole territory it had been foretold they would inherit.⁷

The splendour of such a series of victories spread the name of David far and near, and impressed the recollection of his greatness on outside nations.⁸ The king of

¹ 2 Sam. viii. 3.

² Reading of 2 Sam. viii. 8 for Betah. *Graetz*.

³ 2 Sam. viii. 7, 8. 1 Chron. xviii. 7, 8.

⁴ 1 Kings xi. 23, 24.

⁵ 2 Sam. viii. 6.

⁶ 2 Sam. viii. 5, 6; x. 16, 19.

⁷ Gen. xv. 18-21.

⁸ This campaign is noticed by Nicolaus of Damascus (*Jos., Ant., VII. v. 2*), and Eupolemus (*Euseb., Præp. Evan., ix. 30*).

Hamath, on the Orontes, in gratitude for the destruction of a foe so dangerous to him as Hadadezer, and to secure the good feeling of David, sent a congratulatory mission to Jerusalem by his son, with gifts "of all manner of vessels of gold, silver, and copper."¹ The chariots reserved from the spoil graced the triumphal entry of the conqueror to his capital, and the golden shields, pillars, and vases were hung round the walls of the Tabernacle, where they long reminded Israel of the deeds of their fathers.

But peace was yet distant. The Edomites, south of the Dead Sea, afraid of the preponderance of Israel, had aided the Ammonites, and fought against David. Leaving the siege of Rabbah Ammon, therefore, to Joab, an army was sent under Abishai² to crush this new enemy. It was the first appearance of Edom in Israelitish history since the days of Moses, and it was a disastrous one. A battle fought under the salt mountains at the foot of the Dead Sea resulted in a decisive victory for Abishai.³ Closely pursuing the fugitives, and penetrating to their rocky capital, Petra, the Strong City,⁴ he became master of the country. Joab was then sent to finish the war, and did so with fierce ruthlessness. Extermination was to his taste and he carried it out as far as possible. For six months, during which he remained in the country, every accessible ravine of the Edomite mountains was invaded, and its population put to the sword, till his own men had to bury the dead to prevent a pestilence.⁵ One

¹ 1 Chron. xviii. 9-12. Hamath seems to have been Hittite, at least originally, and as such was the natural ally of David against the Syrians. Sayce, *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. p. 252.

² 1 Chron. xviii. 12.

³ 2 Sam. viii. 13, for Syrians read *Edomites*.

⁴ Ps. lx. 9; cviii. 10.

⁵ 1 Kings xi. 15, 16.

child of the royal house, however, escaped; carried off hastily to Egypt by some faithful slaves of his father. But such was the abiding terror left by the wide massacre of his people, that he would not return to his native state till both Joab and David were dead.¹ The latter, himself, came to Edom after all was over, to give directions for the future. The remnant of the nation were granted their lives, but became his tributaries, and Hebrew posts were established in the mountain passes. Peace thus secured, he returned to Jerusalem and celebrated his triumph by a monument,² perhaps an inscribed tablet carved on the rocks of Edom, after the manner of Eastern kings.

The crisis thus happily surmounted had been momentous, and might well have dismayed a spirit less resolute and less firmly sustained by religious enthusiasm. But amidst the dangers which threatened the State, David had remained not only unshaken but confident of victory. Feeling himself the Anointed of God, he had an abiding faith in his destiny, and this alone went far to secure success. The Philistines in the west were always ready for war, and on the east, the north, and the south a great confederacy had combined against him. If merely human force could have done it, Israel would have been blotted from the roll of peoples. Thus surrounded by foes, however, his hero-soul never wavered or blanched. One of the Psalms, composed, as its title indicates, at this time, discloses his secret thoughts. Recalling, first, the ruinous condition of the State at his accession, he passes on, in notes of triumph, to anticipate his victory over his foes :³

¹ 1 Kings xi. 21.

² 2 Sam. viii. 13, "he gat him a name,"—rather "made him a monument."

³ Ps. lx.

"O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast broken us down;
 Thou hast been displeased: restore us again!
 Thou hast made the state tremble; Thou hast broken it in pieces:
 Heal Thou its wounds, for it reels!
 Thou hast shown Thy people hard things;
 Thou hast made us drink the wine of confusion:
 Thou hast given a banner to **them** that fear Thee
 To flee unto (as a rallying point)¹ **from** the bow;
 (Not to lead us to victory,
 But only) that Thy loved ones may be saved:
 Help, now, with Thy right hand, and hear us!

God has spoken in His sanctuary—for that shall I be glad—
 'I will divide Shechem,²

And measure out the Vale of Succoth;
 Gilead is mine; Manasseh also is mine; (my weapon and my
 robe of war)—

Ephraim is the defence of my head;

Judah my Ruler's sceptre.

(But) Moab is my washing basin;³

Over⁴ Edom³ I throw my shoe.

Cry out, O Philistia, because of me!

Who will bring me to the Strong City? (Petra)

Who will lead me to Edom?

Whom but Thou, O God, who hadst cast us off?

Thou who (before) didst not go out with our armies?

Give us help against our foes

For help of man is vain!

¹ Jer. iv. 6.

² "The enemy will not do it. I Jehovah, will portion it as I please, for it is mine." Shechem and Succoth, the old holy places of the land on this and the other side of Jordan, stand for the whole country.

³ Moab is degraded to the most menial service. Edom is taken possession of. See Ruth iv. 7, 8. Deut. xxv. 9. Philistia need have no hope of casting off the yoke. The conqueror will come with terrors, after his victories elsewhere.

⁴ Or 'Unto,' as to a slave.

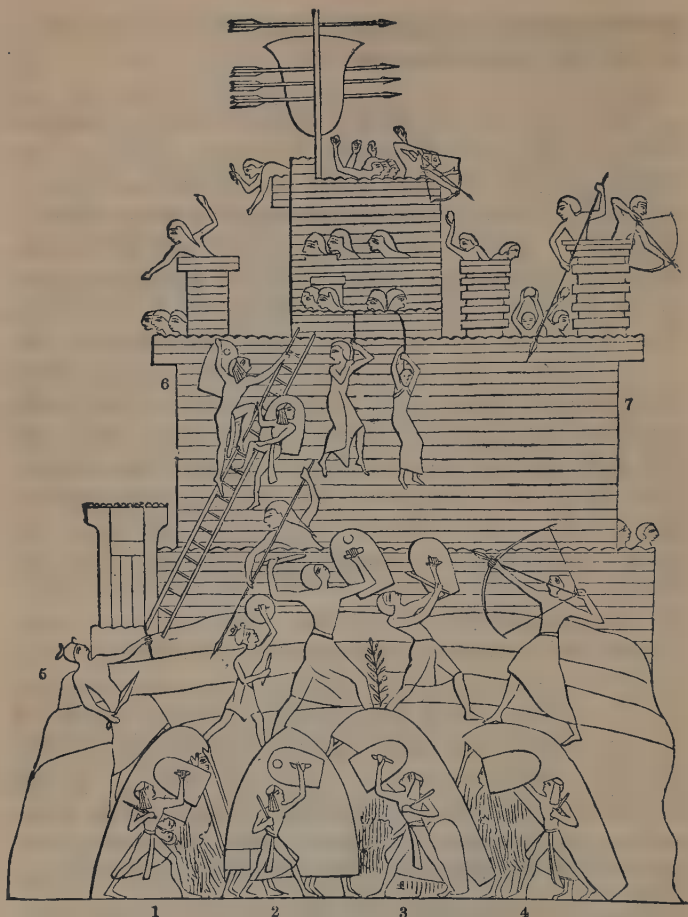
THROUGH GOD SHALL WE GAIN THE VICTORY,
HE will tread down our enemies!"¹

The Ammonites had now lost all their allies, and stood alone to brave the victorious forces of David. Their capital, Rabbah Ammon, "the chief city of Ammon," lay 2,800 feet above the sea—among the eastern hills, 20 miles back from the Jordan, on a line of about 15 miles north of Jerusalem. There was a lower and an upper town, or rather a town and a citadel; the town famous for a permanent stream which rose within its walls; the citadel at some distance to the north, cresting a hill, steep on three sides, and scarped, to strengthen it, on the fourth. Immense walls encircled this fortress, which, itself, was well nigh impregnable from its massy solidity. Unprovided with battering rams or other military siege engines, harassed by vigorous sorties² and unable to cut off the water supply, even the energy of Joab was baffled for nearly two years. At last, however, the town was taken. But the citadel yet held out, though its fall was certain, as it had only one well in it,³ and the communication with the stream below was now cut off. The supreme honour of its conquest Joab reserved for David—a touch of devotion which marks the brightest trait in his character. The king was then, unhappily for himself, as it had proved, in Jerusalem, embittered by remembrances of his conduct to Uriah and of his sin with Bathsheba. "I have fought against Rabbah," wrote the general to his uncle, "and have taken the City of Waters (the lower town); (but the citadel still holds out). Now, therefore, gather the rest of the people together, (and come) and sit down against the citadel and take it, (so as to finish

¹ *Moll. Eisenlohr. Hitzig. Ewald.*

² 2 Sam. xi. 17, ff.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, VII. vii. 5.



SIEGE OF DAPUR, IN THE COUNTRY OF THE AMORITES, BY THE ARMY OF RAMESSES II.

1, 2, 3, 4. Four sons of Rameses in command of four testudos, under cover of which an approach is made to the fortress. 5. A soldier climbing the rock by thrusting an iron spear into the crevices. The soldiers on a line with him represent the light infantry and archers. 6. Two of the princes on a scaling ladder—the one thrown off. 7. Two heralds let down from the fort, to treat with the besiegers. Above are the towers of the citadel, and at the top, the standard of the Amorites. The three arrows in it are understood by Wilkinson to be a sign of defeat, added by the Egyptian painter. Others think them part of the standard.

the siege), lest I have the honour of taking it and the victory be ascribed to me instead of to you.”¹ This summons roused the king from his inglorious life, and on his arrival the citadel was taken by storm. Crowded with the richer inhabitants of the lower town, who had fled to it with their wealth, the stronghold was given up to plunder,² David reserving for himself what was most precious. The crown of the king, which Josephus describes as weighing a talent of gold, and famed for its precious stones, especially a sardonyx³ in its front, was henceforth, he tells us, worn by David himself. Jewish tradition, however, asserts that it was the crown of the idol Moloch, “the king,” as it was called, which is thus alluded to; adding, that as the victorious army approached the god, it was afraid before him, till Ittai of Gath tore the the vast golden diadem⁴ from his head and brought it to David; doing thus what no Israelite could have done for fear of pollution.⁵ The retribution inflicted on the

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 26, ff.

² Jos., *Ant.*, VII. vii. 5. 2 Sam. xii. 30. 1 Chron. xx. 2.

³ A reddish yellow quartz crystal.

⁴ This crown is said to have weighed a talent, or 114 lbs. troy. This, however, may mean that it was *worth* a talent, rather than *weighed* so much. But it was common to hang crowns over the throne or to place them on it. Athenæas describes a crown composed of 10,000 pieces of gold and placed on the throne of King Ptolemy, and Benjamin of Tudela speaks of a crown of gold and gems suspended over the throne of the Emperor Commenes.

⁵ *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Ittai*. The law forbade an Israelite to touch either the gold or silver of an idol. But it was lawful for David to take it from the hand of Ittai, though not from the head of the god. Graetz thinks the crown was that of the idol, and that David henceforth wore it as his own crown. *Gesch.*, vol. i. p. 255. In 2 Sam. xii. 30, the words “their king,” are Milcom or Molech. In the Sept., the words “their king,” follow “Milcom.”

conquered was in keeping with the ferocious spirit of the ancient world. Attempts have been made to¹ explain the statements given,² as referring only to slave labour in smoothing and polishing building stones, threshing grain with iron rollers, felling wood with axes, and making bricks. But though it is evident that only a small portion of the population, perhaps only the prisoners of war, were the objects of the tortures described, it would be a violence to other parts of the sacred narrative, if stern measures, simply as such, were fancied inadmissible. Fierceness towards the vanquished was a characteristic of antiquity from which the Hebrews could not escape. The feeling of human brotherhood is a fruit of Christianity, and was unknown till Christ enforced it. Before His day, the Greek saw a brother man only in the Greek, the Roman only in the Roman, and the son of Israel only in a member of the Hebrew tribes or peoples related in blood. Other races had no rights. Ammon, remotely connected with Israel by descent, had forfeited all claims for mercy by its fierce resistance, its idolatry, and the insults it had heaped on David. It was itself, moreover, infamous for its cruelty towards prisoners. Its king had threatened to put out the right eye of every man of Jabesh Gilead, when the city was taken; to prevent them using the bow thenceforth; and the prophet Amos speaks of their indescribable atrocities to the women of Gilead in their marauding forays.³ That David should have acted towards them as they would have acted to Israel had they been the victors, may not be the higher rule of Christianity, but it was the natural course in his age, and the best of men are creatures of their times. Nor is

¹ By Danz, in last century, and by Graetz in our own day.

² 2 Sam. xii. 31. 1 Chron. xx. 3.

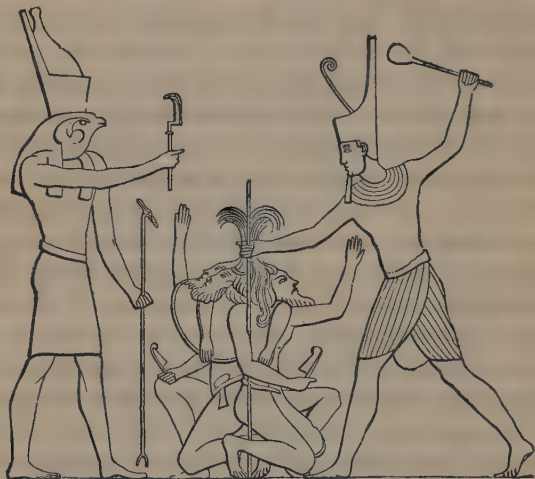
³ Amos i. 13.

it to be forgotten that even the mild Gideon, infuriated at the conduct of the elders of some Reubenite villages, threshed them to death with branches of the thorny acacia, "tearing their flesh" from their bones.¹ At Moab, David had indeed spared a full third of his prisoners, contrary to the usage which doomed all to death, but he had ordered the other two-thirds to be killed. In Edom, Joab, acting for him, had remorselessly cut down every man he could capture, and we shall meet with other cases of equal sternness in future passages of Hebrew history. We must not, let it be repeated, expect the generous humanity of our own time in that of David, a thousand years before Christ. Nothing but ferocity to the vanquished had as yet been dreamed of. Egypt gloried in the piles of hands and heads of the foe gathered before the tent of the king after a battle. Assyria flayed its captives alive; put rings through their lips and noses, and led them like beasts by a cord; blinded them, and in fact multiplied their tortures of every kind.² It is not, moreover, to be forgotten, that even in the middle ages it was usual to kill all common soldiers taken in battle, reserving only knights and the rich, who could pay ransom. The massacre at Limoges, under the sanction of one commonly so gentle as our Black Prince, shows how easy it was for David, nearly three thousand years before, to be stern under great provocation. Before the invention of gunpowder, men fought hand to hand, and the passions were roused to far wilder fierceness than now, when the enemy is almost too far off to be seen. We must therefore, I fear, accept the plain statement in its literal sense, that, on the taking of Rabbah and the other Ammonite cities, David allowed the same terrible punishments to be inflicted on some of the prisoners, as the Ammonites

¹ Jud. viii. 16.

² See vol. ii. p. 399.

themselves were accustomed to inflict on their captives of war. Not to have done so would have kindled a spirit in his own army which he could not have withstood. Even in the days of Joshua, the host had been with difficulty kept from exterminating the Gibeonites, notwithstanding the solemn agreement to spare their lives sworn to by the great leader himself.¹ As the text stands, therefore, so we must read it, noting it as a mark of the spirit



THE PHARAOH SLAYING PRISONERS, THE GOD HORUS LOOKING ON.

of the times. "He sawed them with saws, cut them with iron cutting instruments; tore them with iron toothed threshing sledges, and burned them alive in brick furnaces," or, as Thenius understands it, in their own idol of Moloch, in which they were wont to burn many victims to their gods: a stern protest against their hideous idolatry. Hanun the king, who had kindled the

¹ Josh. ix. 18.

war, had either been killed or had fled, and David seems to have put Shobi, his brother, in his place.¹

Thus at last the wars had ended. The limits of the kingdom, a short time before, had been Dan and Beersheba, on the north and south. But David reigned now from the River of Egypt² to the Euphrates; from Gaza on the west to Thapsacus on the east, and from all the subject nations in this vast empire yearly tribute was exacted; in part, probably, in the form of drafts of slave labour to toil on the royal buildings and other public works.³

It is hard to realize in an age like ours the spirit of one so different as that of David, but it is necessary that we try to do so, to understand the enthusiasm which carried him and his army so triumphantly through such a series of wars. His peaceable relations with Phenicia show that he had not desired them, nor is there any sign of his having been urged by the lust of conquest, which we see in many great Eastern monarchs. Yet the whole region between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates was ablaze with war at the same moment; and Israel, hardly reorganized after the exhaustion and ruin of Saul's final

¹ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 256. His note is worth copying. "It is not said in Samuel that Rabbah Ammon was destroyed at this time, but only in Chronicles, where the reference may be to *the walls*. Since we read in 2 Sam. xvii. 27, that Shobi, son of Nahash, was friendly with David, it follows that Rabbah had been left standing, and that he had apparently put a brother of Hanun over it as king, for which the favoured personage was grateful. It results from this, also, that David could not have inflicted such awful punishments on the Ammonites as commentators imagine from ver. 31." Then comes a learned defence of his explanation as given above.

² El Arish.

³ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 257. See Herzog, *Real Encyc.*, vol. iii. p. 303.
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disaster, seemed in imminent danger of being utterly overwhelmed. The address of Joab to his soldiers before the first battle at Medeba gives the key to the feelings of the day.¹

Zeal for Jehovah as their God, and for their country and brethren as His land and people, had become a deep-rooted passion in every bosom. It was, in fact, a revival of the ancient fervour of the days of Joshua, such as from time to time had burst out even in the darkest hours of the past. This enthusiasm might have been chilled and well nigh lost where the nation was much in contact with heathenism, whether on the sea-coast or in the inland Canaanite towns. But in the lonely mountain valleys of Central Palestine, and in the secluded pastures of Judah and the south, the heart of the people still beat sound. Even during the time of the Judges, appeals made in the name of Jehovah had always found a zealous response from larger or smaller districts. The great deeds of Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah, would have been impossible but for the slumbering religious life, which they knew how to rouse to a vigorous enthusiasm. This latent fervour and hereditary loyalty to Jehovah had been at last rekindled in such power throughout the land by Samuel, that it thenceforth became the passionate, almost the fanatical, glory of the nation. Of this restoration of the spiritual vigour of Israel, David, the anointed of Samuel, was a supreme illustration. In an age especially Puritan, he was the foremost representative of its spirit. With him as with it, religion was the first thought in all relations of life, public or private. The whole community, citizen, soldier, magistrate, and king, alike moved in an atmosphere of the supernatural. They "were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character

¹ See page 246.

from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know Him, to serve Him, to enjoy Him, was with them the great end of existence."¹ Israel, as a whole, was the peculiar people of God; its country was especially His earthly kingdom. Its enemies were foes to Him, and its battles were fought for Him and under His eye. Even in Mahomedanism the enthusiasm kindled by a religious war is seen in the fanatical bravery of the Ghazis of Afghanistan, and by the irresistible fury of the first Arab conquests. It was the same with the Hebrew of David's age. Every victory heightened his national pride in his Divine Leader, to whose protection and aid all was due. "It was well with the people whose God was Jehovah: the people He had chosen for His own inheritance."² Their confidence in David as "the Anointed," rose in proportion to his success. The 110th Psalm, in its primary reference, seems to express the feelings of both the king and the nation in the midst of their greatest danger,³ though, as we know, it points in its secondary but far higher application, to that Messiah of whom he was only the faint type.⁴

¹ Macanlay, *Essay on Milton*.

² Ps. xxxiii. 12.

³ Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. iii.

⁴ I have great pleasure in calling attention to the essay on Messianic Psalms in the admirable work on the Prophecies of Isaiah, by the Rev. J. K. Cheyne, M.A., etc., etc. It is in vol. ii. pp. 175-182. Like him, I desire to recognise a distinctly Messianic character in such Psalms as the 110th, now quoted,

"Jehovah said unto my Lord, 'Sit thou at my right hand¹
 Till I lay thine enemies for a footstool below thy feet.'
 Yes! Jehovah will send to thee the sceptre of power out of Zion :
 Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies !
 Thy people in holy adornment are full of devotion to thee in the
 day of battle :
 Thy youths flock to thee countless as the drops of the morning
 dew !

Jehovah has sworn and will not repent :
 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.'²
 Jehovah, on thy right hand, will shiver kings in pieces in the day
 of his wrath.
 He shall judge among the heathen ;
 The slaughter of His battles will fill the land with the dead ;
 He will crush the heads of thine enemies over wide lands ;
 (When faint) He will drink of the brook by the way,
 And lift up His head (refreshed, to continue the pursuit)."

That a spirit so fierce should breathe through verses so instinct with trust in God, marked the age in which they were written. The river is stained by the soil through which it flows, and even religion takes the hue of the times. The faith of the Covenanters or Puritans expressed itself very differently from that of their descendants of to-day. Indeed, the heroes of every age, in their struggles for God and the truth, have found in

though this does not exclude its illustrating in a fainter degree the dealings of God with His anointed—the king of Israel.

Mr. Cheyne's book, I may say, is in my opinion one of which English scholarship may be proud; while its calm moderation breadth of view, devoutness of tone, and chastened freedom of thought, give it a charm all its own.

¹ Jehovah commands His anointed, David, to take the right-hand place in His war chariot, to go forth with Him to war.

² David united in himself, as earthly head of the theocracy, the priestly and royal dignities, as Melchizedek had done. But at the same time the words have an especial reference to David's Lord.

the language of the Psalms the fittest utterance of their feelings. The Reformers over Europe; the Pilgrim Fathers; the great men of the English Commonwealth; the Scotch champions of religious liberty against the Stuarts, alike turned to the Old Testament, and especially to the Psalms, as the embodiment of their strong trust in God, and of their zeal against foes whom they regarded as no less His enemies than theirs. Nor are we to forget that David lived a whole millennium before Christ had come to temper the passions of mankind, and substitute the gentleness of the Gospel for the terrible sternness of the Law. The 18th Psalm, written by him, according to the title, in gratitude to God for final deliverance from all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul, shows still more strikingly the union of lofty idealism and the sternest severity. The earth seems to shake and tremble, and the pillars of the heavens to move before the presence of God, coming to avenge His anointed.

“ He bowed the heavens and came down;
 Dark clouds were beneath His feet;
 He rode upon a cherub and did fly:
 Yea, He swooped down on the wings of the wind!
 He made darkness His veil:
 Round about Him, like His tent,
 Were the storm-black waters and thick clouds of the skies.
 From the splendour before Him the clouds rolled away,
 (Sending forth) hailstones and flaming lightnings;
 Jehovah thundered from the heavens,
 The Highest called out, aloud,
 (And then fell) hailstones and flaming lightning.”

Such is the coming forth of the mighty One against the enemies of His servant. Now follows their discomfiture and David's deliverance:—

“He sent forth His arrows and scattered them,
He shot out lightnings and discomfited them.
The beds on which the sea rests showed themselves;
The foundations of the earth were laid bare
At thy rebuke, O Jehovah!
At the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils!

Reaching down from on high He took me:
He drew me out from many waters,
He delivered me from my terrible foe,
And from those that hated me;
For they were too strong for me.
They fell upon me in the day of my need,
But Jehovah was my stay;
He led me out into an open place—
He freed me, because He loves me.”

The ground of this interference on his behalf is, he maintains, the knowledge by God of his earnest efforts after a godly life.

“Jehovah did to me according to my uprightness,
He rewarded me according to the cleanness of my hands;
For I took heed to the ways of Jehovah,
And turned not aside wickedly from my God.
All his commands I kept before my eyes,
His laws did I not put away from me.
Thus was I upright before Him;
I kept myself from my sins;
Therefore has Jehovah rewarded me according to my innocence;
According to the cleanness of my hands before Him.”

A comment on the ways of God to man now reveals the singer's conceptions in this respect,—

“To the merciful Thou showest Thyself merciful;
To the upright Thou showest Thyself upright;
To the pure Thou showest Thyself pure;
To the wilful Thou showest Thyself perverse;
Thou savest the humble,
But lowerest Thy brows against the haughty.”

Feeling that he has tried to be upright, pure, and humble, his victories are the gracious return from God.

“Thou, Jehovah, makest my light shine,
Jehovah, my God, enlightens my darkness;
For through Thee I dash to pieces armies (sent against me);
Through my God I bound over the rampart;
That God whose ways are perfect;
The promise of Jehovah is well-tried,
He is a shield to all who trust Him.”

Even the physical endowments of man are His gifts—

“For who but Jehovah is God,
Who is a Rock save our God!
The God who girds me with strength;
Who keeps me safe on my way;
Who gives me the swiftness of the fleet gazelle,
And sets me in safety on my hills;
Who teaches my hands to war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze;
Thou givest to me the shield of Thy help;
Thy right hand has held me up,
And Thy gracious goodness has made me great!”

All his success has come through God alone.

“Thou makest room for my steps under me,
And my feet Thou hast kept firm.
I have pursued my enemies, and overtaken them,
I have not turned back till I had consumed them.
I have dashed them down so that they cannot rise,
They are fallen under my feet.
It is THOU who girdest me with strength for war,
And makest my adversaries bow beneath me.
Thou madest mine enemies turn their backs to me,
Them that hated me I rooted out.

They cried, but no deliverer came to them;
(They cried) to Jehovah, but He gave them no heed;
So I beat them small as dust before the wind,
I trod them down like the mire of the streets.

Thou didst deliver me from the stripes of the nations,
 Thou hast preserved me to be the head of the heathen;
 Peoples (till now) unknown to me do me homage,
 At the report of my fame they obey me;
 Sons of foreign races pay court to me.
 Sons of strange nations grow pale before me,
 And in trembling fear abandon even their castles."

The Psalm ends with a grand doxology.

"Jehovah liveth ! blessed be my Rock,
 Exalted be the God of my salvation !
 That God who has given me my revenge,
 And subdued the nations under me;
 My Deliverer from my enemies;
 He who has lifted me up above my foes :
 Who has rescued me from the violent man,¹
 Therefore will I praise Thee, Jehovah, among the nations,
 And sing to Thy name.
 Thou art the Mighty Helper of Thy King,
 Thou showest favour to Thine Anointed,
 To David and to his seed for ever."²

The man who could write a Psalm like this may have had his human weaknesses and manifold failures and sins, as who has not, but he was in his heart true and godly. Even now such a thanksgiving ode stirs the blood and lifts the thoughts in unwonted reverence to the heavens, but what must have been its effects when first sung, while the victories and deliverances it records were great events of the day; when Benaiah, fresh from the storming of Rabbah, took his wonted place in the Levite choirs who sang this great Te Deum, and the open space round the Tabernacle was crowded with heroes of the wars, listening, with what emotion we may fancy, to the clash of the music, and the loud voices of the singers ! By what effort of imagination could we conceive a modern hero-

¹ (?) Saul.

² *Ewald. Moll. Lengerke. Hitzig. Kay.*

king, or commander-in-chief, even if he had the genius of David, celebrating our victories now, in strains of equal loftiness !

“David, king of Judah,” says Carlyle, “a soul inspired by Divine music and much other heroism, was wont to pour himself forth in song ; he, with seer’s eye and heart, discerned the God-like among the Human ! struck tones that were an echo of the sphere-harmonies, and are still felt to be such. Reader, art thou one of a thousand, able still to *read* a Psalm of David, and catch some echo of it through the old dim centuries ; feeling far off, in thy own heart, what it once was to other hearts made as thine ? ”¹

The amazing results of David’s wars impressed two thoughts indelibly in the hearts of the Hebrew nation. The one is expressed repeatedly in various parts of the Bible :

“The king is not saved by the multitude of an host :
A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.
A horse is a vain thing for safety,
Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.”²

“Through Thee will we overthrow our enemies ;
Through Thy name tread down our adversaries !
I will not trust in my bow,
Neither will my sword save me.”³

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses,
But we will remember the name of Jehovah, our God.”⁴

“Jehovah delighteth not in the strength of a horse,
He takes no pleasure in the strong limbs of a man ;⁵
He taketh pleasure in them that fear Him,

¹ *Miscell. Essays*, vol. vii. p. 124.

² Ps. xxxiii. 16, 17.

³ Ps. xlv. 5, 6.

⁴ Ps. xx. 7.

⁵ Neither in cavalry nor in infantry.

In them that hope in His mercy.¹
The horse is prepared against the day of battle,
But victory comes from Jehovah."²

All that was most heroic in David's age rose from this trust in God, and it fired the souls of the Maccabee heroes centuries later; for man never rises to his grandest or noblest in war except when he believes in the sacredness of the cause for which he contends. It created a profound belief that Jehovah always led the armies of Israel to victory when they went forth to the battle, to make His name great or to save His people. He was the "God of Hosts," that is, of the armies of Israel. Jehovah Zebaoth was invoked before every war, and the troops marched to the field believing that they were invincible through His aid.

David was now at the height of his glory. His enemies had been subdued under him, and he had won a vast empire; wealth from many tributary nations poured into Jerusalem; alliances were eagerly sought by neighbouring powers. His capital had been in great part rebuilt, and he himself had a Tyrian palace of cedar and polished stone. His army was covered with glory. Priest, prophet, and people, alike honoured and loved a king who was first in war and first in peace, and whose life had been a model of uprightness and true worth in every relation. But there are dangers to even the best in extreme prosperity. How easily might he imperil the public liberties now that he was the centre of a power so absolute. At the head of an irresistible soldiery, to whom his nod was law, how hard might it be for him to restrain himself within the checks of the Constitution? Other kings of his day were worshipped as half divine. The lives and property of their subjects

¹ Ps. cxlvii. 11.

² Prov. xxi. 31

were counters with which they might sport as it pleased them. It is to David's honour that, with every temptation to play the Eastern despot, he bore himself, on the whole, with a tender moderation which never invaded the ancient liberties of the nation, endearing him in life and making his memory sacred among his people for ever.





CHAPTER XI.

THE FALL OF DAVID.

IT is a striking distinction of the Bible, that while it dismisses in a few verses the story of David's victories, which, if won by an Egyptian or Assyrian monarch, would have been the great theme of their chroniclers, it dwells with sad detail on the lesson of his fall. It is his glory that he avoided to so great an extent the sins to which his position might so easily have led him; but he did not wholly bear himself as became his nobler characteristics. The higher the glory he enjoyed, the greater the necessity to guard against temptation; but though he did so for the most part, one terrible sin is recorded against him; that connected with Uriah and Bathsheba. That he should have sinned like other men, was only to be expected; but how nobly free and morally healthy must a people have been, to value the dignity, purity, and sacredness of the family so highly as to insert in its public records this sad blemish in the life of their greatest hero; a king wielding absolutely the power of life and death. Far from slavishly flattering him, and drawing a veil over his private life, it seeks to guard its youth, whose morals these records would form, by a story so full of warning.

Nor does David suffer in the final estimate of his true

greatness by this unique fidelity in the disclosure of a sin so dark and calamitous. It would have been kept a palace secret among any other people; but it does not in the end lower a just estimate of him whom it exposes. How much greater does he appear, amidst all his human weakness, by the penitent depth of his sorrow and shame, his noble struggle towards a better life, and his humility under the heaviest calamities, sent as the just punishment of his guilt. "David," says Carlyle, "had fallen into sins enough; blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer and ask, Is this your man according to God's heart? The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults? what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? 'It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' Of all acts, is not, for a man, *repentance* the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin;—that is death: the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility, and fact; is dead: it is 'pure' as dead dry sand is pure. David's life and history, as written for us in these Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, sore baffled, down as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended; ever, with tears, repentance, true, unconquerable purpose, begun anew."¹

The calamity which threw so dark a shadow on the hitherto splendid fame of David, as one who realized in his public relations the ideal of a just and noble ruler,²

¹ *Lectures on Heroes*, p. 43.

² 2 Sam. viii. 15.

and in his private life that of a sincerely religious man, happened in the opening of the second year of the siege of Rabbah. Joab had returned with the army to Ammon "at the time when kings go forth to battle,"¹ but David remained in Jerusalem. An officer of the Gibborim or "braves"—Uriah,² a Hittite by race, and thus one of the old Canaanite stock—lived on the slope of Mount Zion, immediately below the palace.³ A valiant soldier, he had earned the rank of one of the famous thirty-seven decorated heroes of that splendid corps;⁴ but, though an alien, he had adopted the Hebrew religion.⁵ His wife, Bathsheba, the daughter of one of his brother officers, and granddaughter of Ahithophel, David's wisest counsellor,⁶ a woman of extraordinary beauty, appears to have been loved by him with a rare and passionate tenderness.⁷ The flat roof of her house was overlooked from the palace, but, though thus exposed, she had gone to it to bathe, in the cool of one of the fierce summer days. Unfortunately for himself, the king, who had just risen from his siesta, was enjoying the evening breeze on the palace roof at the time, and was seized on the moment with a wild and lawless desire to make her his own. He had already added to the six wives whom he had brought from Hebron.⁸ Each lived in a separate house,⁹ and there were besides a large number of concubines, who lived in the palace.¹⁰ To these, however, he determined to add Bathsheba.

¹ 2 Sam. xi. 1. 1 Kings xx. 22, 26. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10.

² = "Jehovah is my light."

³ 2 Sam. xi. 2.

⁴ 2 Sam. xxiii. 39.

⁵ 2 Sam. xi. 11.

⁶ 2 Sam. xi. 3; xxiii. 34.

⁷ To be inferred from Nathan's parable, 2 Sam. xii. 3.

⁸ 2 Sam. v. 13-16; xv. 16.

⁹ 2 Sam. xiii. 7, 20.

¹⁰ 2 Sam. xvi. 15; xix. 5. The ten left in Jerusalem were evidently only part of the whole number.

Sending for her, therefore, by his officers, with the harsh despotism of Eastern kings, he at once removed her to his harem, nor does she seem to have shown any disinclination, though, in Israel, even a maiden could oppose the royal will in such matters.¹ Such an act was only what was habitually done by the kings around, for they claimed the right, so strange to us, of taking any one they liked as a wife or concubine.² But David stood in a different position from a heathen ruler. It had been expressly forbidden by the Law that a Hebrew monarch should have many wives,³ and while so zealous in all things else, he had offended in this particular. Now, however, he had added a mean and selfish crime to his sinful weakness. After a long life, passed not only without a stain, but with universal recognition of his lofty and sincere religiousness, he had thrown away his good name. In an age of fervent religious enthusiasm, his sin must have created a profound sensation, and went far to undo all the good of his former life. He was a man of about fifty,⁴ and could not plead the folly of youth. Moreover, the partner of his guilt was no obscure person, but the wife of an officer of his guards. Uriah might seek his life when he found out the disgrace brought on his home. The whole corps of Gibborim, indeed, might rise in revolt, to avenge the outrage on one of their most famous officers.

Feeling all this, David instantly saw the necessity of trying to hide his crime; but as one sin too often leads to another, he only increased his guilt by the measure he took to conceal it. Having first caused Bathsheba to

¹ Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 224.

² Vol. i. p. 363. Gen. xii. 15; xx. 2.

³ Deut. xvii. 17.

⁴ So Ewald. Graetz would make him about fifty-eight.

return to her own house, he sent to the camp for Uriah, and brought him to Jerusalem, on pretext of wishing to hear news from the seat of war. A hollow audience ended, he courteously dismissed the veteran, with the crafty recommendation to go home and refresh himself after his fatigues, flattering him at the same time by sending thither a dish from the royal table, for his entertainment. But the wily scheme was destined to fail. Uriah had caught the austere and lofty spirit of David's better days, and refused any self-indulgence while the Ark of God was in the field; the army in rough booths of branches; and Joab, and his comrades of the Gibborim, sleeping on the ground. Nothing would induce him to spend the night anywhere but in the quarters of the watch at the gate of the palace. On the second day the king vainly tried to gain his base end by inducing him to drink to excess, but he still retained his high idea of duty, and slept, as before, with the guard.¹

Seeing his plan thus baulked, a third crime, of appalling meanness and blackness, seemed the only remaining way of escape, and David, more reckless as his position grew desperate, did not hesitate to adopt it. He would add murder to adultery, and use Uriah himself to carry back his own death warrant to Ammon. The victim was, therefore, dismissed with a letter to Joab, to "Set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle, and retire from him, that he may be smitten and die." No reason was given, and perhaps Joab thought that the brave soldier had done some wrong, for which this was the penalty. At any rate, it was for the king to command, and for him, unscrupulous as he was, to obey. Uriah was sent to attack a part of the city most strongly defended, and

¹ Uriah's conduct throws a strong light on the admirable spirit and temper of the army in that strict and Puritan age.

not being properly supported, was presently killed, with some others, in a fierce sally, or struck down by a missile from the walls.¹

Ever since the death of Abimelech at Thebez, by the piece of a millstone thrown down on him by a woman, it had been a maxim in Hebrew warfare never to approach the walls of a besieged city too closely.² In sending off a courier therefore to David, with the news that his command was obeyed, Joab took care to warn the messenger, in case the king expressed anger at what had happened, to add the words, that Uriah the Hittite was dead. Such a close of the message, as was foreseen, prevented any indignation. "It was only the chance of war," said David, with smooth hypocrisy; "Joab must not be discouraged." Bathsheba was now free, and after a formal mourning of seven days³ for her husband, she went to the house of his murderer and became his favourite wife.

It would have been well for David had he died, like Uriah, in the wars, before such a stain soiled his hitherto splendid fame. But the wickedness possible to even the best of us had for a time got the mastery of him. Meanwhile, as months passed the secret came out, for the marriage could not be hid, and Uriah's death had raised whispers in both the palace and city. Such a sin in a king might have been hushed up elsewhere, but the national conscience in Israel, thanks in great measure to David himself, was for the time nobly sensitive. The mutterings of the bazaars at last found an open

¹ 2 Sam. xi. 16, 17. Ewald thinks he was killed by a stone cast from the walls of Rabbah. *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 225.

² 2 Sam. xi. 20, 21.

³ See 1 Sam. xxxi. 13. Gen. l. 10. Job. ii. 13. Judith xvi. 24. Eccus. xxii. 12.

expression in the palace. Nathan, the prophet, still young,¹ though already David's adviser, determined, under an impulse from God, to venture into the royal presence, and bring home to his master in all their blackness the sins he had committed. Seeking an audience, therefore, and having cast himself on his knees and touched the ground with his forehead in the lowly prostration demanded in coming before the king,² he began his finely courageous task with a dexterous skill that demands admiration. Using the form of a parable, so natural in an Oriental, and shrinking from no detail which might make David's conduct the blacker, he forced an unreserved admission of his guilt from his own lips. Nor did he end with merely rousing the fallen man's conscience. Careless of personal danger in thus addressing an Eastern king, he announced in the name of God that as he had slain Uriah, the sword should never depart from his house. Because, moreover, he had married Uriah's wife, thus obtained, he would himself be dishonoured in his own household, and that not secretly as Uriah had been, but openly, in the sight of the sun.³ A son had been born from the shameless union, and David's heart doted upon it; but it would die, because, by his deed, he had "given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme."⁴ It was indeed too certain that he had done so, for how was

¹ He must have been so, since he lived till late into the life of Solomon. Jewish tradition makes him the eighth son of Jesse, but there is no proof of this.

² 1 Kings i. 23.

³ Sam. xii. 1-13.

⁴ 2 Sam. xii. 14. Geiger translates these words, "Because thou hast blasphemed the Lord greatly;" but De Wette, Erdmann, Sachs, and Thenius give the sense of our Authorized Version.

the glory of the theocracy dimmed when the Divine law was thus dishonoured even by the king of God's chosen people?

An ordinary despot would have punished such a bold indictment by instant death or imprisonment, but it recalled David to his better self. Stricken to the soul, he could only answer that he had indeed sinned. Nor was his contrition a mere form of words. It could not have been more sincere. The first chastisement for his sin presently deepened it. Love for his children was a special characteristic of his nature, and the child of Bathsheba had won his heart. But the prophet had told him it would die, and it sickened almost forthwith. In vain David prayed for its life, and fasted, and lay, night after night,¹ upon the earth, in broken humility; if perchance, it might be spared. After lingering for seven days, it died. "The hand of God was heavy upon him," and he felt that it was just that it should be so. But recovery from such a fall as his is only slow. To regain peace of mind; to renew a godly life so sadly interrupted; to crush attempts at self excuse; to suppress the evil passions so long allowed to prevail, implies many a prayer, and long struggles of soul. In the 51st and 32nd Psalms we may trace the spiritual recovery of the penitent. In the 51st his whole soul pours itself forth in a confession of his guilt, the transparent sincerity and depth of feeling of which has made it for three thousand years the chosen utterance of broken-hearted contrition. Never has the inner soul revealed itself more humbly; never have its longings for a purer spiritual life found more touching expression.

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 16; the word implies that he lay on the earth night after night.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness:
According to the greatness of Thy compassion wipe out my
iniquity (from Thy book).

Wash me thoroughly from my misdeed;

And cleanse me from my sin.

For I fully own my transgressions;

My sin is ever in my sight.

Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done what is evil
in thine eyes.

(From Thee therefore alone can I hope for pardon and peace,—

And this I say), That thou mayest be (owned) righteous in Thy
chastisements,

And justified as my judge.

Alas! in sin was I born,

In guilt did my mother conceive me;

But Thou desirest truth in the chambers of the heart.

In the hidden depths of the soul make me to know (true)
wisdom,

Purify me (from guilt) with hyssop, that I may be clean;

Wash me that I may be whiter than the snow!

Make me hear joy and gladness,

That the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

O hide Thy face from my sins;

Blot out all my iniquities:

Create a clean heart in me, O God,

Renew a right (calm) spirit within me.

Cast me not away from Thy presence,

Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me,

Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation,

Uphold me by (the gift of) a spirit devoted (to Thy will).

I will teach Thy ways to those who have wandered from them,

And sinners will turn themselves to Thee.

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my
salvation!

That my tongue may sing aloud of Thy righteousness.

O Lord, open Thou my lips,

And my mouth will show forth Thy praise.

For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it;

In burnt-offering Thou hast no delight.
 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
 A broken and crushed heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Do good, in Thy good pleasure, unto Zion;
 Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.¹

Then wilt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,
 with burnt-offerings of part, and burnt-offerings of the whole
 victim;

Then young oxen shall be laid on Thine altar."

No truer conceptions of religion than those embodied in this Psalm can be found. Surrounded by priests; accustomed to ritual offerings and sacrifices, he sets the merely outward and ceremonial at its true value, and recognises the broken and crushed heart as alone of weight with the Eternal. The soul, not the external form is with him the essential. He has caught the spirit of Samuel and the prophets, and sees in religion not an act but a life.² Loathing the sin he had committed, he yearns after a better future in which it will be seen how thoroughly he has forsaken evil, and returned to a pure, just and godly spirit.

In the 32nd Psalm the heavens begin to clear. He has

¹ "Let not my sin turn Thee against Thy holy city." The walls of Jerusalem were not yet built. See 1 Kings iii. 1; ix. 15, 19.

² The same feeling occurs more than once. Thus: "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also will please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." Ps. lxi. 30, 31. So Asaph, Ps. l. 13, 14: "Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High." So, again, David: "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; so hast thou revealed to me: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required. . . . I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart." Ps. xl. 6, 8.

confessed his sin and forsaken it, and has found mercy. His health had given way through the long anguish of his spirit, but at last, he could believe that even so great a sinner as he had been could be restored to God's favour.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man to whom Jehovah does not impute iniquity,
In whose spirit is no self-deception.

While I had kept silent (and had not confessed my guilt) my
very bones wasted away,
Amidst my moaning all day long.
For day and night Thy hand pressed heavily on me:
My moisture was changed into the dryness of the burning
summer.

(Then) I acknowledged my sin to thee: not hiding my guilt;
I said: 'I will confess my transgressions to Jehovah;'
And (forthwith) Thou liftedst off from me (by Thy forgiveness)
the burden of my sins.

Therefore let every godly man pray to Thee in the time (of
trouble); when He may (surely) find Thee.
So, when the floods burst on him, in mighty waters,
They shall not come nigh to him.

Thou art my hiding place; Thou wilt guard me in the hour of
need;

Thou wilt ever compass me with songs of deliverance.
(Thou sayest) 'I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way
that thou shouldest go.

'I will counsel thee, keeping mine eyes upon thee.'
'Be not as the horse or the mule, without understanding,'
'Whose mouth must be held in by bit and rein'
'Else they will not come kindly toward thee.'

Many sorrows has the ungodly man,
But Jehovah surrounds with His goodness him who trusts in
Him.

Rejoice in Jehovah, and be glad, ye upright,
And shout for joy all ye that are true of heart."

The bow on the cloud shone out fully at last on the birth of a second son of Bathsheba. David had called his name Solomon—"the peaceful"—perhaps in the belief that the gift of a child in the place of the one that had died was a pledge of the fully restored favour of God. That he was right, if this were in his thoughts, was seen forthwith. Nathan once more appeared in the palace, announcing that repentance so sincere had been accepted, and changed the name of the infant, by Divine monition, to Jedidiah, the "Beloved of Jah."





CHAPTER XII.

THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

THE great sin of David had now been effaced, as far as contrition and open confession could make men forget it. No one could use it as an excuse for acts of vice. But its evil results were beyond control. The only course to prevent them would have been the abolition of polygamy in the palace; but it was now too late even for that. It had led to the sin with Bathsheba; the children of different mothers were growing up in an impure and corrupting atmosphere; and it would inevitably lead to plots as to the succession. Could the ideal of Isaac and Rebekah in their marriage simplicity have been adopted, at least for the royal house, the worst calamities of the future might have been averted. But neither David nor Nathan, nor their age at large, had as yet realized the evils of polygamy enough, to propose such a reform. It might have no more temptation for the king himself, but it remained as a root of bitterness, destined to yield deadly fruit in his own household and among his posterity.

The princes, like the wives of David, had each a separate house,¹ and thus the court was broken up into a number of small circles. A curious blending of simplicity and formal dignity in these mark at once the

¹ 2 Sam. xiii. 8, 20.

remoteness of the times and the growing importance of the monarchy. Each of the princes had his own mule,¹ and his own retainers, while Absalom at least, soon imitated royal state by having chariots and horses, preceded and attended, when he came abroad, by fifty running footmen.² Yet the sheep-shearing on a pasture farm he held near Ephraim or Ephron, was a great yearly festival, to which all the king's sons might be invited,³ and Tamar, his full sister, was famous for her skill in making dainty cakes.⁴ The eldest born of the royal family was Amnon, the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel, near Carmel, in the Negeb. He had been born in Hebron, and was regarded by his father as heir presumptive to the throne, but we know nothing of him except that he had, as his special friend, Jonadab, a nephew of David, —a man very "subtil," but evidently unprincipled. Of Chileab, or Daniel, the son of Abigail, of Carmel, Nabal's widow, we also know nothing, though he was the second born; but the third son, Absalom, and his full sister, Tamar, have a special though unfortunate prominence in Jewish history. They were the only children of David of royal blood on both sides, their mother, Maacah, having been the daughter of the chief of Geshur, a small principality in the north-east of Bashan. In them, above all the other children of their father, the beauty of his race had been preserved, though in this respect Adonijah and Solomon were also famous.

¹ 1 Sam. xiii. 29.

² 2 Sam. xv. 1. Runners always accompany the vehicle of a great man in the East. Ackland speaks of the cousins of a Nawab running alongside his carriage, and of a coolie always running alongside his own palanquin. *Manners and Customs of India*, p. 6.

³ 2 Sam. xiii. 27.

⁴ 2 Sam. xiii. 6.

Absalom especially was deemed the handsomest man in the kingdom. "In all Israel there was none to be praised for his beauty like him." "From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him." His glorious hair won universal admiration, and its weight when cut seems to have been minutely noted, year by year. His sister's name, Tamar—"the Palm"—may perhaps be a reminiscence of the counterpart she offered to his personal charms.

Unfortunately, the loose morals fostered by polygamy, and very possibly his father's conduct with Bathsheba, had excited in Amnon a wild and lawless passion for his half-sister Tamar, from whom he was secluded by the Eastern isolation of the royal maidens. In an evil moment, Jonadab, his friend, noticing his growing pale and thin, wormed from him the secret of his love, and suggested to him the means of its gratification. He was to pretend illness, and ask her attendance on him as his nurse.¹ What followed is too shameful to repeat. Coming to him² with sisterly kindness, her shameful treatment was henceforth remembered as the beginning of the disasters of David's later years. Brutal passion had turned at once, in Amnon, into unmanly and furious hatred. Driven from his room, the injured woman, frantic at the indignity she had suffered, tore the long-sleeved robe which, as a princess, she wore, and putting ashes on her head, and laying her hand on it, as further signs of grief, passed on towards Absalom's house, screaming aloud.³

¹ As a kind nurse, to please him, "Tamar took flour and kneaded it, and made cakes in (Amnon's) sight, and baked the cakes, and took a pan and poured them out before him." 2 Sam. xiii. 8, 9.

² *Sept.*

³ Where Tamar (2 Sam. xiii. 13) speaks of the king as perhaps letting Amnon marry her, Graetz assumes that she must have

Such a wrong done to his sister touched at once her brother's heart and his pride; while, according to the Eastern code of honour, it entailed on him the duty of revenge.¹ Meanwhile he waited to see if David would do anything in the matter. But though enraged at such a crime, the king's weakness towards all his children kept him from any act of justice against the offender. "He vexed not the spirit of Amnon, for he loved him; for he was his firstborn."² Absalom, however, though forced for the time to confine his hatred of the offender to avoidance of his company, was determined that he should not escape. At last, after two years, suspicion of any designed revenge had died away sufficiently to enable him to carry it out. Celebrating the annual sheep-shearing feast on his farm, the equivalent of our harvest home, on a great scale,³ he made it the pretext for inviting all David's sons, by their father's permission—Amnon among them. But, as the carousal after the feast went on, the unfortunate man was suddenly stabbed, by Absalom's order. Terrified each for his own life, the other princes forthwith mounted their mules in hot haste, and fled back to Jerusalem, whither dark rumours had already preceded them, magnifying the catastrophe into a general massacre of the royal family; a crime of which Absalom seems to have been thought quite capable. The palace was in consternation, for David's life also seemed likely to be taken. But Jonadab, always intimate

been her mother's daughter by a marriage previous to that with David. But this is only an attempted solution of the difficulty. It is the general belief that David possessed a dispensing power that might have legitimized even the marriage of Amnon to his half-sister. See vol. ii. p. 94.

¹ Gen. xxxiv. 25, 31.

² Sept.

³ Sept. "Like a king's feast." Mills, *Samaritans*, p. 106.

with the dark side of those round him, was able to calm the excitement, in a measure, by telling the king that he had seen the light of revenge on Absalom's face ever since Tamar's disgrace. As the secret designer of that crime, indeed, he may well have been in the prince's confidence as well as in that of Amnon. The morals of the palace had become in every way corrupt. Absalom, however, had to flee to the principality of his grandfather, beyond the Jordan, where he remained for the next three years.¹

With the guilt of a brother's blood on his hands, the retirement of Geshur might well have sobered Absalom, and made him a better man. But his physical beauty was in striking contrast with his mental and moral defects. Tamar's shame had, apparently, been only one of the motives for murdering Amnon, who was the heir to the throne. Abigail's son was either dead, or too insignificant to succeed, and the death of the eldest born would make Absalom himself heir. With a princess for mother, and himself of such kingly splendour of person as attracted universal admiration, his whole soul was absorbed by vanity and ambition. David, unsuspecting by nature, and weakened by a remembrance of his own fall, though uneasy at the state of things which Amnon's murder revealed, contented himself with firmly refusing to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem.² In the mean

¹ Graetz thinks Geshur was in the Negeb, but he seems alone in this opinion. *Gesch.*, vol. i. p. 401.

² Graetz thinks that David was inclined to make war against Geshur, to secure the person of Absalom, basing his opinion on 2 Sam. xiii. 39; xiv. 1. But Eisenlohr shows forcibly that there is no ground, even in the Hebrew, for such a notion (p. 277). Besides, how opposed is it to the weakness which would not hear of violence being used against Absalom even after his rebellion. Thenius understands the passage, that David had at first intended

time palace intrigues were rife. Joab, all-powerful with the army, was secretly against Solomon, and in favour of Absalom as heir to the throne, thinking it better to run the risk of temporary confusion with the eldest living prince as king, than to meet the troubles likely to rise from the doubtful birth of the son of Bathsheba. But the mainstay of Absalom's faction was Ahithophel, the grandfather of Bathsheba, a man of surpassing astuteness, with whom was joined in this secret treason his son Eliam, Bathsheba's father, one of the Gibborim; both holding their honour compromised by David's sin. Determined on revenge, they only waited an opportunity to make use of Absalom against his father, and the prince's banishment helped them. Nor could any propitiation made by David in the least abate their hostility. He had raised Bathsheba to the position of first queen, and had nominated her infant son, Solomon, as his heir; but they were inexorable. Adonijah, the next prince after Absalom, and, like him, born at Hebron, while apparently passive as regarded his elder brother, was no less bitterly opposed than he to Solomon, since his own claim to the throne would be worthless if this latest born child of David were named his successor. Plots enough were thus simmering in the different palace circles, the mothers of each claimant playing an important part in them, as usual in the East.

The king's anger at Absalom and his keen grief for the death of Amnon, having at last been abated by time, Joab, eager to secure the favour of the heir presumptive, with whom he was probably in secret communication, fancied that he might now move towards getting him recalled. For this end he employed a female to pursue Absalom, but gave up the design as his grief for Amnon passed off. *Samuel*, vol. ii. p. 189.

emissary, a woman of Tekoa, a mountain village south of Bethlehem, afterwards the birthplace of the prophet Amos.¹ Skilful with her tongue, and trained to her part by Joab, she sought the presence of David, probably when he was sitting as judge at the gate of the city. Dressed in deep mourning, and falling prostrate on the ground in obeisance, she pleaded for the king's help. Then followed an invented tale. She was, she said, a widow, and had had two sons, one of whom, however, had been killed by the other. All the family connections were now demanded that the second son should be surrendered to them to give his life for that of his brother, and this fierce blood revenge threatened to leave her dead husband with no descendant to continue his name in Israel; a calamity beyond measure terrible to a Hebrew. David, thinking a word enough, dismissed her kindly with the promise that he would give orders for her son's protection. But the wily diplomatist had not yet gained her point. She wanted to get him to say that the blood revenge in the supposed case was unjust. "My Lord, O king," said she, "if it be wrong to leave blood-guilt unpunished, let the penalty strike me, not thee, as it will if thou takest the part of the homicide."² "If any one threaten you, let him be brought to me," replied David, "and he will not touch you any more." This might have been enough; but it was the woman's part to repeat herself with feminine persistency, and thus draw the king into confirming by an oath, what he had said, and this she succeeded in doing. She prays that the avengers of blood may not be allowed to keep up the feud, lest they should kill her son; for the death of one son is surely enough. "As Jehovah liveth," replies the king, "not one of his hairs

¹ Amos i. 1.

² I paraphrase the dialogue, to make it more easily understood.

shall fall to the earth." Begging to be allowed to add one word more, the woman continued: "If thou hast acted thus in this case, prohibiting the carrying out of blood revenge, why dost thou carry out that revenge to the loss of thy subjects, the people of God? For in speaking as thou hast done, thou art as one guilty, in giving the promise thou hast made, and in the decision thou hast expressed, so long as thou dost not fetch home thy banished son. Thou mayest indeed well pardon him, for we must all die, and are, when dead, like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Nothing will bring back the dead man, Amnon; nothing, even if thou wert to kill Absalom for the murder. God does not take the life of the sinner when he transgresses; but He takes heed not to drive away from Him the wanderer from right when he penitently seeks to return." This must have struck home to David's conscience; for had he not himself been forgiven, though he had acted so foully in the case of Uriah? But the woman continues, wishing to veil somewhat her reference to Absalom, and renewing her artificial garrulity: "I have come to thee to speak of this matter, in terror at the demand for my son; for I thought, perchance, thou wouldst grant my prayer, and save my son. Therefore I besought thee, 'Let the word of my lord the king, I pray thee, be comfortable; for, as an angel of God, thou listenest with patience and wisdom to good and bad. The Lord thy God be with thee.'"¹

Knowing what he did of the feelings of Joab, David at once saw that the whole scene had been prepared by him, to secure the return of Absalom; the woman herself,

¹ I have followed Thenius in this paraphrase. In 2 Sam. xiv. 7, the woman speaks of "quenching my coal which is left." In the same way, in Ceylon, children are spoken of as "coals." To put out the fire on the hearth is the idea in both cases.

indeed, admitting the fact. An order for his recall was accordingly issued and handed to Joab, who received it with the wonted lowly prostrations.¹ Hurrying now to Geshur, he presently brought Absalom back. He might henceforth live at his country home, but was forbidden to enter Jerusalem.

The prince had thus so far triumphed, but his plans were still impeded by the refusal of his father to let him appear in the capital or resume his full standing. A spirit in any degree noble would have accepted gratefully the kindness shown, even though thus for the time restricted on one point, and would have sought to atone for the faults of the past by future loyalty and merit. But Absalom had inherited no trait of his father's character, for even his ambition was mean and selfish. That any restraint should be imposed on him was enough; he would have revenge; his father should suffer for it. He would drive him from his throne and seize it himself. He had three sons, and a daughter,² called Tamar, after his sister, and like her in beauty, so that he could hope to establish a dynasty if he were king. But he could do little till he was back in Jerusalem and restored to his full honours. Two years, however, passed without permission being granted him to appear at court. Even Joab, his secret supporter, could not venture to ask the king to grant a full pardon. But Absalom knew how to force him to do so. Always reckless, he punished the fancied slight by causing a field of barley belonging to his friend to be burned down. This had the desired effect. Furious at the insult, Joab hurried to see him, only to be won over by his splendid presence and specious words. Intercession with David presently obtained his recall to court, and smooth hypocrisy completed a hollow

¹ 2 Sam. xiv. 22.

² 2 Sam. xiv. 22

reconciliation. Prostrating himself on the ground, in prescribed form, before his father, to simulate frank homage and penitence, he only rose at his command, to receive the kiss of forgiveness and pardon. He had triumphed again, and forthwith began to use his victory to bring about his father's ruin.

It was now at least five years since Amnon's death and about ten since the scandal of Uriah and Bathsheba.¹ Peace had reigned through the wide empire, and David's pure and upright life had proved that his fall was only a passing lapse from which he had soon recovered himself. Some time during this period, however, he seems to have taken the one false step in his policy which has come down to us. Urged, apparently, by the growing expense of the monarchy, which demanded additional taxes; by the desire, perhaps, to have more easy command of labour for his public undertakings; or, it may be, to consolidate his power by an exact knowledge of his resources; he had resolved on taking a census of the whole nation. But, whatever his secret thoughts, the project involved a breach of his theocratic relations, and hence was a grievous sin. A law of Moses prescribed that whenever the people were numbered a tax of half a shekel a head should be paid by every man above twenty²—"that there be no plague among them"—and Josephus has fancied that the offence consisted in its not being levied. But there is no hint of this in the narrative, nor is the collection of the tax mentioned in earlier numberings of the people.³ The probability is, that the proposal was a step towards the

¹ Birth of Solomon, say two years after death of Uriah; Amnon's offence, two years before his murder; three years of Absalom's exile; two years of his stay at Jerusalem = 9. Amnon's crime was perhaps a year after Solomon's birth.

² Exod. xxx. 13.

³ Num. xxvi.

formal enrolment of the whole male population for stricter military service than they had hitherto rendered. They had formed a vast reserve of militia, but it had been under the orders of their local or tribal chiefs and had been liable in ordinary cases only to a month's service a year. The new census may have been intended to furnish the king with a muster roll of the whole population, which he might use to prejudice the national liberties and to aggrandise the power of the throne. Regarded, thus, as a first step towards despotism, it was not only a breach of the divinely established Constitution, but provoked great opposition from the people at large, and led to the most painful results.¹ Even Joab, to whom David's will was usually law, shrank from a step so unpopular. "May the people increase one hundredfold," said he, "however many there be, and may the king live to see it, but why should he wish such a thing?" No excuse, however, would be taken, and so Joab and the great officers of the "host"—not the priests and Levites as hitherto—had reluctantly to go out to "muster," not merely to number, the men fit for war in Israel. The ungrateful task was commenced at Aroer on the Jabbok, in the tribe of Gad, east of the Jordan; the officials and others appointed, camping in the open fields near, that there might be room for the multitudes who came from the district around, of which Aroer was the chosen centre. Thence the commissioners made their way northwards, through Gilead, then westward to the borders of Tyre and Sidon; proceeding, finally, south as far as Beersheba, the border

¹ It is very striking to notice how the proposal to take the census is said to have risen in the mind of David, in the purposes of Providence, on account of the sins of the people. Quiet and prosperity were sapping the high tone of the earlier years of David's reign. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

village of Israel. Nearly ten months had been consumed, and the tribe of Benjamin had not yet been registered, nor that of Levi, since it was free from military duty. The muster-rolls of the rest, however, showed an aggregate of 800,000 able-bodied men, fit for war. But if David felt kingly pride at such a result, it was speedily humbled, for now, once more, the stern words of a prophet denounced his course as an offence to God. Instead of relying on the promise of Jehovah to protect His own land, he had carried out a haughty scheme without the permission of the supreme King, and for ends involving distrust of Him. This time it was Gad, not Nathan, who had been directed by God to approach him. Both he and his people had sinned,¹ but it was left to him to choose the chastisement. Three² years of famine, three months' flight before invaders, or three days' pestilence were the terrible alternatives. But the heart of David had once more regained its healthy tone, and the answer was worthy of him. "I am in a great strait: let us now fall into the hand of Jehovah; for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." An outbreak of the plague followed soon after. It was the time of the wheat-harvest³ and as usual in the hot and dry Eastern summer, and amidst towns and villages densely peopled and deficient in all sanitary arrangements, the awful visitation raged with terrible severity. In three days 70,000 persons died. A vision of the angel of Jehovah, seen on the top of Moriah, the hill just outside the Jerusalem of that day, his hand stretched out over the city to destroy it, intensified the agony of the hour. Before the capital had been struck, however, the plague was

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

² So, in 1 Chron. xi. 34, and also (Sept.) in 2 Sam. xxiv. 13.

³ *Sept.*

mercifully stayed. But the remembrance of it was not suffered to pass away. The awful angelic presence had sanctified the spot where he was seen. He had stood on the flat crown of the hill used, from its breezy height, as a threshing-floor, by one Araunah, a Jebusite, perhaps formerly the king of Jerusalem.¹ Thither, therefore, by the direction of Gad, David repaired the same day, with his body guard and attendants, to consecrate it for ever, by erecting an altar and offering sacrifice on it. Honoured by such a visit, and doubtless awed by its object, Araunah would fain have put the ground at David's service as a free gift. But it would have been unworthy of him to offer to God what had cost him nothing, and he therefore bought both the threshing-floor and the oxen, which at the moment were treading out the grain. A rude altar was then built, the oxen slain, a fire kindled with yokes and implements given for the purpose, sacrifices consumed as an acknowledgment of past guilt, and peace offerings presented in grateful thanks that the pestilence had ceased. From that time till now the spot has been in an especial sense holy ground. A few years after the plague, the threshing-floor became the site of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple.

The popular feeling against the enrolment, and the association of the outburst of the plague with it, may have made the task of Absalom in gaining the hearts of the nation more easy. The forced unity under a king was, besides, still felt a restraint on their old tribal independence, and left them restless and not indisposed to change. They had gained by substituting David for Saul; why not by a second revolution? The charm of personal respect and reverence for David had been sadly

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 23. But Wellhausen reads, for "did Araunah," etc., "doth the servant of my lord, the king, give," etc.

broken by the incident of Bathsheba. Fear of his turning despotic had been roused by the military census. Old jealousies, moreover, had gradually rekindled. Judah had lost its importance since the capital was removed from Hebron to Jerusalem, and all the tribes stood on an equal footing as subjects. Thus embittered, it was ready to leave David and elect Absalom in his stead, at its capital, Hebron. So deep, indeed, was this feeling, that as it showed itself the first to revolt, it proved the last to return to allegiance, after the rebellion was crushed.¹ The great house of Ephraim, also, ill brooked a king not of its own blood, and the tribes in the north had, probably, their own complaints, however petty or ill-founded; for no government can long escape giving some offence.

Things thus seemed promising for the success of the conspiracy. Restored to court, Absalom could surround himself with his own creatures, and prepare his measures as circumstances allowed. David had been contented to go abroad on his royal mule, but the prince now astonished Jerusalem by the novelty of chariots and horses, which, though part of the state of heathen kings, had hitherto been seen only in his father's triumphal procession, after his victories. Absalom even before his exile had appeared in public, like David, preceded and accompanied by a body of running footmen, keeping pace with his equipage, and clearing his way. He now resumed the same pomp.² It had been usual, moreover, for the king to sit as judge at the gate of the city, on certain days, to settle disputes brought from all parts of the land. Among the crowds of suitors, it was inevitable

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 11.

² Chardin mentions that a candidate for the office of a king's runner in Persia accomplished about 120 miles in fourteen hours, and was thought slow for not having done it in twelve.

that some should suffer delay, and the decisions given must necessarily be always unsatisfactory to one side. Absalom now began to move among these strangers, affecting as great condescension as on other occasions he showed lordliness and glitter. Speaking freely to all, assuring every one that his case was undoubtedly good; regretting that the king had appointed no deputy to hear cases, so as to expedite settlement; hinting at the different state of things there would be if he were made the chief judge; and in all ways assuming the air of easy good fellowship and sympathy, he won himself high favour. It was usual to approach the king or any one of high rank with a lowly prostration, but this Absalom would not permit; raising such as proffered "obeisance," he would embrace and kiss them. Vague hopes were thus excited; discontent fanned; the popular favour turned from David to himself; the awful incident of the plague, which they regarded the king as having brought on them by his sin in regard to the census, doubtless weighing heavily to his disadvantage.

Four years¹ having passed in this insidious plotting, it seemed to the conspirators that they might now take open action. Joab, though ready to support Absalom against Solomon, was too loyal to David to be trusted against him, and had therefore been kept in ignorance of the proposed revolution. Ahithophel, however, in his hatred of the king, had thrown himself into the movement with his whole soul, and was Absalom's chief adviser. A plan was now formed which promised success. Under the specious pretext of having made a vow while in Geshur, that, if restored to Jerusalem, he would offer sacrifices, in thanksgiving, at Hebron, the ancient sanctuary of the tribe, and his native town,

¹ 2 Sam. xv. 7. For forty read four.

Absalom obtained permission to go thither. His real motive was to begin his revolt in the capital of Judah, where he could take his final steps more freely than at Jerusalem. Before starting, messengers were sent off to every part of the country to proclaim Absalom as king, at the sound of signal trumpet blasts, which were to be repeated from point to point, announcing that he had actually been crowned at Hebron. To prevent suspicion, the prince himself set out for that city with a train of two hundred citizens of Jerusalem, many of them, it may be supposed, of the best families. Entirely in ignorance of his schemes, they went with him only to take part in the religious solemnities, but their presence gave him weight, as they seemed to belong to his party. Ahithophel also came from Gilo, close by, to meet him, and openly espoused his cause. A public feast had been arranged, as usual, in connection with the sacrifices. At this, Absalom, to whose bounty the multitude owed the holiday, was proclaimed king; the duped and excitable crowd entering into the plot only too eagerly. The proclamation thus made, was speedily published throughout the land, with the exception of Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, word was brought to David of the breaking out of the revolution, and of its wide success. He had loved Amnon, but his affection for Absalom was so much greater that he had never dreamed of his treachery. Numbers from all the tribes were hastening to Hebron, to do homage to the new king, and the conspiracy was daily growing. Even Amasa, David's nephew, jealous of Joab, had joined it. The calamity was overwhelming. That his darling Absalom should be a traitor and seek his throne and his life, and that not only the tribes at large, but his own tribe, Judah, should have deserted him, for a time unnerved and dismayed even the strong heart

of David. His resolution, however, was quickly taken. To shut himself up in Jerusalem would be fatal, for the city could not withstand an attack from the whole strength of the land, and at best the destruction of life would be fearful. His only course was to leave, and escape beyond Jordan, to gain time. Orders were therefore given to the court and its dependants to make ready for instant flight. Ten of the royal concubines, only, were left behind "to keep the house."

The incidents of this momentous day are given with a greater fulness than those of any other in Old Testament history. Followed by all his household, David set out, with bare feet, as a sign of mourning. The first halt, to gather his followers, was near a house known as the "Far off."¹ It was then seen that, if he had enemies, he also had true friends. Crowds of the citizens had gone with him to share his fortunes, and, with his body guard and the Gibborim, in their full number of 600,² now gathered before him. The sight of the crowd and of these heroes, was a glimpse of sunshine through the gathering storm, and roused at once David's gratitude and magnanimity. Addressing Ittai, apparently the commander of the 600, who had snatched the crown from the image of Moloch at the taking of Ammon, he generously urged him, as a stranger and exile, connected with the army for only a few years past, not to throw himself into a doubtful cause. He had better, he said, return with the corps, "his brethren," and "abide with the king;" perhaps Absalom, but possibly Achish, his former lord.³ "Why should he," David, "make him wander to and fro with him; he would advise him to go, and the Lord show him mercy

¹ 2 Sam. xv. 17.

² 2 Sam. xv. 18.

³ The Sept. omit the words "the king." 2 Sam. xv. 19.

and truth!" But men who had braved all the perils of his wilderness life, when hunted by Saul, had no thought of deserting him when he was once more driven into exile. Their wives and children were with them, but that did not matter. "As Jehovah liveth," replied Ittai, "and as my lord, the king, liveth, wherever the king is, there shall I be." Nor was the band, as a whole, less faithful. David could not reject a devotion so touching, and having given them permission to follow him, they and their families passed on before, and took up their places in the procession. The excitement, meantime, was intense, the vast concourse weeping and wailing aloud. The whole population, indeed, were moved by the spectacle of a king so illustrious, the conqueror of wide realms, a national hero from his youth, and lately on such a pinnacle of glory, driven from his throne by the treason of his son; a fugitive, bareheaded, barefooted, and wrapt in the long cloak of a mourner. The deep gorge of the Kidron, then a stream, now a dry wady, was presently reached; the king, already past sixty, standing by the brook, once more, till all his followers had crossed over.¹ A little farther on, he rested again beside an olive tree, at the branching of the roads beneath the Mount of Olives. Zadok and Abiathar the two high priests, with the whole body of the Levites, had hurried from Jerusalem, bearing the Ark, that David might have that sacred pledge of the Divine presence and blessing with him in his flight. But he had already recovered his equanimity, and his noble spirit of trust in God. It was better, he told them, to carry back the Ark to its resting place on Mount Zion. If God pleased, he would ere long see both it and the Tabernacle once more; but if Jehovah had no delight in him: "Behold,

¹ Wellhausen. 2 Sam. xv. 23.

here I am, let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him." His promptness and vigorous shrewdness were, also, once more in full play. The sons of the priests could serve him better than their fathers, in this emergency. He would wait at the fords of the Jordan¹ till they brought news to him how matters went in the city.

The long procession now began the ascent of the Mount of Olives, the turn in the road soon bringing the last view of Jerusalem. Weeping aloud as he went; his head covered in his mantle, in token of sorrow, David climbed slowly upwards, walking on painfully, without sandals, amongst the crowd, who like him veiled their heads, in their grief, and gave way to general lamentation. News of the defection of Ahithophel now reached him; a calamity so great that it evoked a prayer that his counsel might be defeated. A little farther, and it seemed as if the prayer were already heard. At a spot on the top of the hill, known as one of the "high places"² then much frequented for the worship of God, David's "friend" or "companion"³ Hushai, from the district of the Archites, a clan on the southern edge of Ephraim,⁴ suddenly came up to cast in his lot with him, his coat rent and earth on his head, in token of profound grief. But he could be of far more use in Jerusalem as a counterpoise to Ahithophel in the counsels of Absalom, and David therefore induced him to go back and make friends with the new king, that he might neutralize the influence of that arch enemy. Whatever he learned could be communicated to Zadok

¹ 2 Sam. xv. 28. *Thenius. Keil*

² 2 Sam. xv. 32, "where he worshipped God" rather, "where God was wont to be worshipped." *Keil. Thenius.*

³ 2 Sam. xv. 37. 1 Chron. xxvii. 33.

⁴ Joshua xvi. 2.

and Abiathar, whose sons would forthwith hasten on with the news.

The journey had scarcely been resumed when, after reaching the first slopes of the eastern descent, another stoppage was caused. Ziba, formerly a slave of Saul, but now of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, and the steward of his lands, overtook the king. He had been the means of bringing the prince to Jerusalem, by making known to David his existence and hiding place in Gilead, but having been made over to him, once more, as a slave of his House, had contrived a deep laid plot to regain his freedom at the cost of his master's ruin. He brought with him two asses, ready saddled for riding, and bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred cakes of raisins, a hundred of figs,¹ and a skin of wine; a gift than which none could be more acceptable under the circumstances. Presenting them with a skilful affectation of loyalty, he told the king, in answer to an inquiry, that his master had stayed in Jerusalem in the belief that he would be made king now that David had fled; a statement afterwards proved to be a base calumny, invented for Ziba's own ends. Meanwhile, it answered his purpose; for David, excited by the events of the day, and hastily taking for granted that Mephibosheth, like Absalom, had betrayed him, made over all the unfortunate prince's possessions to his accuser. At Bahurim, at the head of the pass towards Jericho, where Phaltiel, the husband of Michal, had been turned back, a fresh humiliation awaited the king. Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite, and a member of the house of Saul, suddenly made his appearance on the crest of the hills lining the road. The long cherished hatred of his tribe to one whom they regarded as at

¹ *Sept.*, dates.

once a usurper, and the murderer of the fallen dynasty, found utterance from his lips. Running along the top of the ridge, which was separated by a deep wady from the steep track down which David was passing, he kept hurling stones and handfuls of dust at the king, cursing him as he did so, with frantic bitterness. The vengeance of Jehovah, he cried out, had at last overtaken David for all his deeds to the house of Saul. He was the "Man of Blood," stained with the slaughter of Abner and Ishbosheth, and of the seven kinsmen of the fallen dynasty, at Gibeon. Furious at such an attack, Abishai, who was marching at David's side, would fain have crossed the ravine and killed him, but permission was refused. His curses seemed to the stricken king as if sanctioned by God. Having allowed even Absalom to revolt, He might well have sent Shimei to complete the dishonour. It might be, moreover, that if he bore such insults calmly, God would hereafter requite him with good. But the curses were not forgotten, and were to come back, long after, on the reviler's head. At last there was once more peace, and before long the fugitives reached the open plain at the fords of the Jordan, where they were for the moment safe.

Absalom entered Jerusalem in triumph very soon after David had left it. A vast multitude escorted him, and Ahithophel, the soul of the conspiracy, rode by his side. It was still early in the day, for David had fled in the morning, and there was yet time before night for decisive action. Among the first to meet and congratulate the new king was Hushai, whose apparent treachery to "his friend," shocked even Absalom for the moment. But a courtier's ready flow of words dispelled his suspicions and induced the weak man to admit the seeming traitor to his confidence. One great point

had been gained for David. He had in the very palace a tried friend on whom he might depend to turn things as far as possible in his favour. A council was now held, to decide further action; Ahithophel, taking the lead by suggestions, the astuteness of which were in keeping with his fame. Absalom, he urged, should, at once, publicly take to himself the concubines left behind by his father. To do so would be recognised as committing him finally to a hopeless breach with David, and would give the people confidence in his not deserting them, if they fully identified themselves with him. It was, moreover, a recognised form of assuming the throne, for the wives and concubines of a king were always the special inheritance of his successor. Absalom was only too easily persuaded to this step, and the royal tent was therefore spread on the flat roof of the palace, that his open appropriation of the royal harem might be seen by all. But more must be done, in Ahithophel's opinion, before the new king could give himself up to security or to luxurious self indulgence. As wise as he was unprincipled, he gave advice which justified the exaggerated belief of the people, that he spoke like an oracle.¹ David, he said, was as yet weary and weak-handed, and might be easily surprised and overcome. Twelve thousand chosen men, whom he himself undertook to lead, would be enough. He would start after him forthwith, and before morning would have fallen upon him and killed him. The people with him would at once flee, and no life but his would be lost. There would be no bloodshed to raise popular feeling. It was a critical moment for David. The counsel pleased not only the weak-headed prince, but the elders of Israel, before whom, apparently, it was given. Hushai, however, proved

¹ 2 Sam. xvi. 23.

equal to the emergency. Summoned before Absalom to give his opinion, he at once, with the readiest duplicity, urged a totally opposite course. David and his braves were, he said, heroes, and the course of events had roused them to a fierceness like that of a bear robbed of its cubs. The king was, moreover, a great master of war, and would take care to encamp apart from the women and children, and civilians. He would, doubtless, have chosen some separate defile for his quarters, so that when Ahithophel fell on the multitude, it would raise a cry that harmless citizens had been slaughtered, and turn the people against the new king. Moreover, his bravest men, on discovering the mistake, would be filled with terror, for the massacre would rouse David, himself a great soldier, and would infuriate beyond bounds the heroes round him. He advised, therefore, that Absalom should call out all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, in numbers like the sand on the sea-shore, and that he should lead them in person. In that case he would come on his father and crush him by multitudes countless as the dewdrops of the morning, and leave none of his adherents alive. Or, if David had gone into some city, he, Absalom, would be able to assail it with such a force, that after it was taken, his men might drag it down with grappling irons and throw it stone by stone into the wady at hand, till no one should be able to tell where it stood.¹ Hushai must have known the man well with whom he had to do, else such a braggart speech would have defeated his aim. But it suited Absalom, for it set him in the front and inflamed his imagination to play the part of a great conqueror. David was virtually saved, for if his son could gather an army so could he, now that time was gained. Com-

¹ 2 Sam. xvii. 1-13.

municating his success as soon as possible to Zadok and Abiathar, Hushai directed them to send word to David, not to stay even a night on this side of the Jordan fords, but to pass over instantly to the eastern districts. The two young men, their sons, who were to take the message, both famous runners,¹ as nearly all the youth of Israel seem to have been, had been waiting by the Fuller's Spring, in the Kidron valley, outside the Water Gate, which opened 130 feet above them, on the south-west of the city. A maid sent to tell them was able to do so without detection, but they were noticed by a boy as they were starting, and he, divining their purpose, set off hurriedly to Absalom and betrayed them. They had, however, suspected the treachery, and pressing on at their swiftest, reached Bahurim in time to take refuge in a friendly house. Here, an underground cistern in the court offered a ready hiding-place, and in this they secreted themselves; the housewife aiding them by spreading a cloth over the narrow mouth and heaping ground corn on it, so as to conceal it effectually.² Nor was the care unneeded, for Absalom's men arrived forthwith; only, however, to be sent off in a wrong direction. Once out of sight, the two young priests were drawn up from their dismal prison, and before night David had heard the message of Hushai from their lips. Acting promptly on it, the camp was at once in motion, and in spite of the darkness, the whole body had crossed the Jordan safely before morning.

Not the least of the benefits from Hushai's counsel was the effect on Ahithophel of its being followed.

¹ 2 Sam. xviii. 26.

² Rainwater cisterns are like huge bottles excavated in the soft rock. The mouths are only a little wider than a man's body.

Feeling himself displaced by this new rival, and seeing not only that he could not hope for the supremacy, on which his ambition had counted, but that Absalom was incapable of bringing to a successful issue the revolution he had begun, he retired to his house at Gilo, and having duly made his will, quietly withdrew from the evil of which he had been the chief cause, by hanging himself.

The details given of the further course of the revolt, and of David's measures for its suppression, are very meagre. Not less than three months¹ appear to have passed before things came to a crisis. In these, Absalom, having been solemnly anointed in Jerusalem,² proceeded leisurely to call out and muster the whole military strength of Israel, over which he placed Amasa, a nephew of David, but on his father's side of wild Arabian blood. David had retired to Mahanaim, the former capital of Ishbosheth. It was now seen how prudent his course had been in leaving Jerusalem. The Eastern tribes, always in a measure indifferent to the action of those west of the river, rallied round him, while his position enabled him to overawe Moab, Ammon, Zoba, and other regions which he had conquered. Nor was friendly help wanting. Shobi, the Ammonite, of Rabbah—the son of Nahash, its former king; and Machir, the son of Ammiel,³ a powerful sheik of eastern Manasseh, or Gad—the friend and host of Mephibosheth in former years; and Barzillai,⁴ an old and wealthy Gileadite, sent to Mahanaim mattresses, metal and earthen dishes, and household utensils,⁵ for the king and his household, and lavishly supplied them with food from the

¹ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 249.

² 2 Sam. xix. 10.

³ = "The people of God."

⁴ = "The iron one."

⁵ *Sept.*, and *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 250.

rich produce of their districts.¹ The defences of Mahanaim were also, no doubt, strengthened; and the fighting host vigorously kept in hand, but no particulars are given by which to picture closely the state of affairs as the decisive moment approached.

Happily, however, the same obscurity does not rest on the feelings with which David awaited the issue. Some of his Psalms, written either at this time or as a retrospect, bring before us his fears and hopes, and show the strength of his trust in God amidst all his troubles. The 41st, the 55th, the 69th, and the 109th have been from remote antiquity supposed to refer to his betrayal by Ahithophel, "his own familiar friend, whom he had trusted, and who ate of his bread," but had now "lifted up his heel" against him.² Except the treachery of Absalom, nothing had affected him more.

"It was not an enemy that contemned me; then I could have borne it.

He did not openly rise against me; then I could have hidden myself from him.

But it was thou, a man mine equal;

My friend and my acquaintance.

We took sweet counsel together,

We walked to the house of God together.

* * * * *

He has put forth his hands on such as be at peace with him;

He has broken his covenant;

His lips are smoother than honey, but war is in his heart;

His words are softer than oil; yet were they drawn swords.

* * * * *

Cast thy burden on Jehovah, and He will sustain thee;

He will never suffer the upright to be moved."³

¹ 2 Sam. xvii. 28, 29. *Ewald.*

² Ps. xli. 9.

³ Ps. lv. 12-14, 20-22.

The terrible maledictions of the 69th and the 109th Psalms have their best explanation in the intensity of feeling roused by Ahithophel's course. Nor, let it be repeated, must we forget how long David lived before the gentleness of Christ tempered the sternness of the Old Dispensation.

In the 3rd Psalm we seem to have a hymn of joyful confidence in God, marking the refreshment of mind and body after strengthening rest, when worn out by the toil of the flight from Jerusalem.

“Jehovah, how are my enemies increased;
Many are they that rise up against me.
Many say of my soul,
'There is no help for him in God.'

But Thou, O Jehovah, art a shield around me,
My glory, and the lifter up of my head.
I called aloud on Jehovah,
And He heard me from His holy hill.

I laid me down and slept;
I awoke, because Jehovah sustained me:
I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,
Who have encamped themselves round about me.

Up then, Jehovah! help me, my God!
Thou smitest the jaw-bone of all my enemies,
Thou breakest out the teeth of the wicked.
In Jehovah alone is help found!
May Thy blessing rest on Thy people!”

The 4th Psalm forms a striking companion to this fine lyric. In it, David, in the consciousness of his innocence, rises nobly above the calumnies and injurious bearing of his enemies; and, in reliance on the protection of God, finds that confidence which enables him to lie down in the quiet of night with full peace of soul.

"Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness:
 Thou who hast made wide room for me when in distress,
 Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer!
 Ye sons of men, how long, dishonouring my glory,
 Will ye love vanity, will ye seek after lies?¹

Know that Jehovah has chosen him who is true to Him;
 Jehovah will hear when I call upon Him!

Stand in awe and keep from sin;
 Meditate in your heart, on your bed, and be still.
 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
 And trust in Jehovah!

Many say, 'Who will give us to see good?'
 Lift Thou the light of Thy countenance on us, O Jehovah!

Thou hast shed a gladness in my heart
 Higher than when corn and wine most abound.
 I lay me down in peace, and will calmly sleep,
 For Thou, Jehovah, alone
 Givest me to dwell in safety."²

To this time, rather than any other, may be perhaps ascribed the exquisite expression of trust in God which breathes through the 23rd Psalm. No earthly darkness can be allowed to trouble the calm serenity of soul which long experience of the goodness of God inspires.

"Jehovah is my Shepherd: I shall not want.
 He makes me to lie down in green pastures:
 He leads me beside the still waters.
 He revives my soul,
 He leads me in paths of righteousness,
 For His name's sake.

¹ By rebellion and slander. They insult and dishonour David by it; but that in which they trust—the rise of Absalom—is a vain and false hope.

² Psalms iii. and iv. are ascribed to this time by Ewald, Eisenlohr, and others.

Yea, though I walk through a vale dark as death,
I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me;
Thy rod and Thy staff alike comfort me!¹

Thou preparest a table for me before the eyes of my enemies :
Thou anointest my head with oil,² my cup runneth over!

Pure goodness and mercy alone will follow me all my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever."³

Under a leader of such high worth, and filled with a confidence in God so touching and elevating, the triumph of David's force over a movement like that of Absalom was only a matter of time. The decisive battle was fought on the east of the Jordan, in a district known as

¹ "When on a narrow bridle path, cut out on the face of a precipitous ridge, I observed a native shepherd with his flock, which, as usual, followed him. He frequently stopped and looked back; and if he saw a sheep creeping up too far, or coming too near the edge of the dangerous precipice, would go back, and putting his crook round one of the hind legs, would gently pull it to him. Though a Grampian Highlander, I now for the first time saw the real use of the crook in directing sheep in the right way. Going up to the shepherd, I noticed, moreover, that he had a long rod as tall as himself, with a thick band of iron round the lower half. The region was infested with wolves, hyenas, and other dangerous animals, which were apt to prowl in the night about the place where the sheep lay. When any did so, the shepherd would strike the animal such a blow with this rod as drove it off. This brought to my mind the expression of David, the shepherd, 'Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' The staff clearly means God's watchful, guiding providence; the rod His omnipotence in defending His people from all foes without or within." *Life of Dr. Duff*, vol. ii. pp. 165-6. This reminds one of Coleridge's expression, "Thy rod and Thy staff, both, comfort me."

² It was a special mark of honour to a guest that his host should anoint his head. Luke vii. 46.

³ *Kay, Olshausen, Mills, Ewald, Hitzig, and Lengerke*. I have retained "for ever," instead of "length of days." Eisenlohr has "for ever."

the Wood of Ephraim.¹ Mahanaim had apparently been first attacked, without success,² and Absalom's vast host forced to a trial of strength which might end the strife. It seems to have been posted without skill in a position from which retreat was difficult; in this respect comparing unfavourably with the arrangement of David's battalions. Carefully divided and subdivided into regiments and companies of 1,000 and 100 respectively, each under selected officers, these were massed in three divisions, commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, the Philistine colonel of the 600 Gibborim, or Guards. David himself, no longer "fearful and trembling," or wishing the wings of a dove to flee far away and be at rest,³ proposed to take the command in chief; his old military instincts reviving at the sound of the trumpets. But the "Light of Israel"⁴ was too precious to be endangered, and once more, as in the old Philistine wars, the army insisted on his not going into battle. If they were beaten, said they, or if half of them fell, it would be of less moment than if his life were lost; for, as leader, he was worth ten thousand men. He was, therefore, constrained to remain within the walls with a body of reserve, to succour the rest of the troops, if necessary. The various battalions, numbering, we know not how many thousands,⁵ marched out to battle, defiling before him at the city gate. One command only, so far as we know, was given them; but that was repeatedly enforced—that Absalom was to be spared and gently treated if he fell into their hands. Wise in most things, his fatherly

¹ Graetz calls it "the Wood of Rephaim," or the Giants.

² *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 251. ³ Ps. lv. 5, 6. ⁴ 2 Sam. xxi. 17.

⁵ *Ewald* thinks that David's army numbered 20,000, judging from the words of 2 Sam. xviii. 3. "Half" = 10,000. *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 252.

affection made the great soldier weak to an extreme in dealing with his sons.

Absalom's army greatly outnumbered that of David, and the fiercely contested hand to hand struggles of antiquity were necessarily very bloody. But the victory remained with the king. Twenty thousand of the prince's men lay dead on the field, and his huge force broke into helpless rout. The pursuit, however, was even more fatal than the open field; the thickets and marshes of the woods arresting, breaking up, and bewildering the fugitives, so that escape was difficult. Among others, Absalom himself met his end. Hurrying through the tangled glades of the forest on his tall mule, one of the branches of a great terebinth, under which he chanced to pass, caught in his thick hair and held him fast, while his beast, running from under him, left him suspended in mid air.¹ Hearing of this, Joab himself hastened to the spot, with three light javelins,² and thrust them into the prince as he struggled to free himself from the bough; the ten armour bearers³ who always followed the "Captain of the Host," finishing the bloody work.

This stern but politic and just act at once ended the war. The trumpet call to cease pursuit forthwith sounded, by Joab's orders, far and near, for he wished to spare the people.⁴ Absalom's death saved many lives. It had been ignoble, but his burial was still more

¹ *Land and Book*, pp. 243, 306.

² The word translated "darts" is never used for a weapon except in this case. It always means rods of wood. Were the darts of sharpened wood? On the incident, see *Studien und Kritiken*, 1841, p. 1007.

³ The "armour bearers," or "arms-bearers," were those who carried extra spears, etc., and the great shield of the combatants. They also fought at his side, if necessary. 1 Sam. xiv. 12.

⁴ 2 Sam. xviii. 16; for "held back" read "spared."

so. Cutting down the body from the tree, Joab's men threw it, as it was, into a hole in the ground hard by, and piled a heap of stones over it, as a sign of bitter anger at the traitor. He had raised a pompous monument to himself in the "King's Vale," a quarter of a mile from Jerusalem,¹ to preserve his memory; his three sons having already died. But, instead of this, his crimes left his place of rest marked only by a rough cairn, like that raised over the criminal or the outcast;² every passer-by afterwards, doubtless, throwing a stone on the mound, as Arabs still do with detested graves.³

Only the difficulty now remained of breaking the news to David of his favourite son's death. Ahimaaz, the young priest, would fain, for love of the king, have run with the intelligence to Mahanaim, but Joab, in kindness to him, that he might not be the bearer of evil tidings, ordered an Ethiopian who was on the spot, to hurry on and announce what had happened. Ahimaaz might hesitate to make the whole truth known, but no such delicacy would stand in the way of the other. The priest, however, was allowed to follow, a little later, and being famous for swiftness,⁴ soon outstripped his competitor. David, meanwhile, anxiously awaited news at the gate, on the tower over which stood watchmen to tell the approach of any messenger. But it was left to the Ethiopian to break the fatal secret. That Absalom was dead instantly eclipsed all other thoughts in the king's mind. Hasting

¹ Jos. *Ant.*, VII. xi. 3. It is called a "pillar," 2 Sam. xviii. 18, and also a "hand" (place, *A.V.*). See page 111.

² Such a cairn was raised over Achan, and the fallen king of Ai, and still marks the grave of notorious criminals.

³ *Land and Book*, p. 490.

⁴ 2 Sam. xviii. 23, "by the way of the plain" = circle. Ewald thinks this means running in a style peculiar to himself. *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 254.

to the chamber over the gate, he gave himself up to uncontrollable grief, lamenting that he had not died in his stead. The triumphal army had marched out under his smile; but his terrible grief threw such a cloud over their return that they stole back into the fortress like men ashamed. Nor would he appear till Joab, always faithful to him, pointed out the impolicy of thus dispiriting men who had ventured their lives for his cause, and the danger that, if he did not at once thank them publicly, they would disband themselves that night. Then, at last, he took his seat in the gate, and once more summoning the army from their tents, rewarded their enthusiasm by fitting words of praise as they marched proudly past.





CHAPTER XIII.

CLOSE OF DAVID'S REIGN.

IT was imperative that David at this crisis should suppress his private feelings and act with prudence and decision. The tie between the tribes was still very loose, and the rivalry between Judah and Ephraim, the South and the North, might burst into a flame at any moment. No private rights of the throne over the nation were recognised. The free action of the people was indispensable for the acceptance even of a hero-king as their sovereign. What should be done, was everywhere a question. Should the old independence and isolation of the tribes be restored, or should they re-elect David, or choose some one else as king, now Absalom was dead? Public feeling, at last, turned once more to David. The northern tribes, with Ephraim at their head, were, strange to say, the first to renew their homage to one, who, they justly said, had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. News of their proposed return speedily reached Mahanaim, cheering him by the prospect of a peaceful restoration, which, however, was clouded by the fact that Judah, his own tribe, still held back. Anxious to win it again to loyalty, Amasa, one of its members, was sent to its chief men to gain them over; a promise that he should be made head of the army instead of Joab stimulating his

zeal. A hearty invitation to the king and all his followers to return, followed presently.

Things were now settling down into their old course. A great deputation from Judah, which unfortunately acted in this matter without concert with the northern tribes, came at once to Gilgal, to escort David back in triumph to Jerusalem, and without dreaming of giving offence to their brethren, he proceeded to the near side to meet them. Among others, a thousand men of Benjamin, Saul's tribe, had come down in attendance on Shimei of Bahurim, who had so shamefully insulted him on the day of his flight from Absalom. Terrified for his life, he eagerly pressed forward to seek pardon now that David's fortune was again in the ascendant. A ferry boat¹ plied to and fro, to bring over the royal household and its effects, and in this Shimei hastened to cross. Throwing himself at David's feet, he was now as craven as he had before been insolent; pleading that if he had grievously offended, he was at least the first of the house of Joseph² to meet "his lord, the king." The fiery Abishai could hardly be restrained from killing him on the spot, but David would not permit the day to be stained by any bloodshed, and even condescended to swear to the offender that his life should be spared. Another, very different suppliant was then announced—Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, David's early magnanimous friend. He came stumbling into the presence on his helpless feet, with beard untrimmed; his feet and clothes unwashed from the day of the king's flight. He had thus visibly mourned for his patron's troubles as he would for the greatest calamity, though Absalom had been in power in Jerusalem, and might at any moment have killed him for such fidelity to

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 18.

² 2 Sam. xix. 26.

the dethroned king. His explanation of not having followed over the Jordan was simple and perfect. Ziba, his father's slave, now his own slave-steward, had gone off with his ass, instead of bringing it to him as ordered, and his lameness made it impossible to join in the king's flight. His humility in the presence of David was touching in the extreme. He had been stripped of all his lands by him through the slanders of Ziba. But David was "as an angel of God": let him do what might be good in his eyes. He had, he felt, though innocent, no claim on the king, since he belonged to the house of Saul, every member of which, according to Eastern usage, might expect only death at the hands of a new sovereign. Entirely without blame as he was, he could only leave all to the king, for his birth left him no civil rights¹ to plead for pity or help. So utterly humbled was he, indeed, that he thanked the king for having let him eat at the royal table, instead of taking his life. But Ziba and his fifteen sons and twenty slaves had forestalled the unhappy prince in his audience of David. Coming down among the first, with Shimei, a fitting companion, he had crossed over and done homage before Mephibosheth arrived, and had had the opportunity of telling his own story. It seems strange

¹ Ewald fancies that Mephibosheth did not deny that he had at one time hoped the kingdom would come to him. But thoughts without overt acts are not indictable. Eisenlohr thinks his whole speech to David betrays a guilty conscience. It may be so, but I cannot see it. It is probable, however, that a man so upright and magnanimous as David, must have had some reason for restoring only half his property to Mephibosheth, though it seems a pity that such an Iago as Ziba got the other half. Certainly, the party of Saul had shown its vitality only too plainly during the rebellion, and David might fear to make any of its members, even if themselves loyal, too strong.

that David, so able in many respects, should have been so simple in others. Fresh calumnies had evidently again prejudiced him against the son of his old friend, who, instead of obtaining his grandfather's lands in full, and seeing the slanderer justly punished, was dismissed with the restoration of only half of his patrimony, Ziba receiving the other. Thus does successful villany often flourish, and modest merit suffer at the hands of unprincipled audacity, even under a prince anxious to do justly to all. So far as the brief notice left of the incident goes, David had little to be proud of in his treatment of the son of such a matchless friend.

The great sheik Barzillai, the Gileadite, though a man of eighty, had also come to the Jordan to bid farewell to the king. He had provided for his sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim, and David, feeling under great obligations to him, would fain have had him return with him to Jerusalem and enjoy his favour. But the ambitions of life were over with the old man. His greatest desire was to die in his own city and be buried beside his father and mother, and he, therefore, with due thanks, declined the invitation. His son, Chimham, however, joined the king's party, and henceforth lived at Jerusalem or at Bethlehem where a building—perhaps a ruin—known by his name, still existed in Jeremiah's day, four hundred years later. These brief stoppages being over, the king and his followers crossed the Jordan.

But his troubles were not even yet ended. The jealousy of the other tribes towards Judah had been keenly roused by the fact that, though they were the first to return to their allegiance, it had forestalled them in the honour of leading the king back to his throne. The politic step of that tribe, in sending an

escort to Jordan to meet him, had given it the whole glory of the restoration, though it had been last to submit. Soon after the arrival of the men of Judah, a great gathering from all Israel had assembled at Gilgal to receive David, but the rival tribe had anticipated them, and had as it were, appropriated him to themselves. Thus apparently overreached, the northern tribes kindled in a moment into a paroxysm of jealous hatred, and the old feud between South and North broke out in unchecked fierceness. Angry complaints on each side led to biting retorts. The boast of the men of Judah, that David was one of themselves, was met by the answer, that if they had one share in David, the other tribes had ten, and that, besides, Ephraim, not Judah, was the firstborn of Joseph, and thus the rightful head of the nation.¹ Did not they, also, first advise that the king be brought back? A bitter quarrel broke out; the words of the men of Judah being even fiercer than those of the men of Israel. But the crisis soon came. Amidst the strife the blast of a trumpet was suddenly heard. It was blown by one Sheba, the son of Bichri a Benjamite, from the mountains of Ephraim, a man of position, and a fanatical partizan of the supposed rights of the ten tribes in opposition to those of Judah. Some one presently raised the ominous cry, now heard for the first time, but to be repeated at the breaking up of the nation under Jeroboam: "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse—every man to his tents, O Israel." The spark fell on dry tinder, and in a moment burst into wide flame. The cry was caught up and re-echoed far and near, and to a man the members of the ten tribes present drew

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 43. For "we have more right in David" read "are, also, rather, the firstborn." *Sept.*

off, leaving David with the men of Judah alone.¹ Then, as ever after, they resolutely stood faithful to him and his house.

Under such gloomy circumstances the entry to Jerusalem must have been shorn of its glory. A new rebellion had broken out, far more dangerous than that of Absalom. No time must be lost. Amasa, as the new commander in chief, received orders to collect the muster of Judah within three days, and report himself and them to the king. Not returning, however, within that time, and the affair being urgent, Abishai² was ordered to start at once in pursuit of Sheba—with some volunteers collected by Joab, and the king's guards, and the Gibborim—lest he should seize some strong town and matters be made still more serious.³ Amasa reached Gibeon as this force marched out. Fear of being supplanted in the supreme command had, long before, led to the murder of Abner by Joab; and now that he met one who had actually been appointed to his old honours since the death of Absalom, his jealousy burst out afresh. Going up to the new generalissimo, and taking him reverently by the beard, with the right hand, as if to kiss it—a mode of salutation marking intimate friendship⁴—he managed in bowing, to let his sword, hanging under his war cloak, slip from its sheath. Picking it up quickly with his left hand, of which he could make dexterous use, while Amasa's attention was diverted by the salutation,

¹ A number of Benjamites adhered to Judah, from living among them or on their borders. But Judah was the only complete tribe still loyal to David.

² The *Heb.* has Abishai: the *Sept.*, Amasa: the *Syriac*, Joab.

³ 2 Sam. xx. 6: "Throw a shadow over our eye (give us trouble)." *Sept.*

⁴ Among the Arabs to kiss the beard is a mark of special respect.

and while he was powerless by his beard being held, Joab plunged the blade into his bowels with such force that the one stab was fatal. The appearance of the murderer as he stood over the dying man, his dress and even his sandals red with the blood that had spurted from the terrible gash, was long remembered, but the deed once done, he turned forthwith to the pursuit of Sheba as if nothing had happened; firm in his unswerving fidelity to David. For a moment, indeed, there was a pause in the advance; the men standing still when they came to where the dying Amasa writhed in his blood, but one of Joab's men having dragged the body, still living, off the path, and spread a cloak over it, the march was resumed with no more delay.

Sheba had ere this passed through all the central and northern cities, as far as the meadow of Beth Maacah—a place of some importance, since it is called “a city and a mother in Israel.” It lay in the extreme north of Palestine, near Lake Merom.¹ Everywhere the new revolution seemed popular: the country at large flocking after its banner. A stand was at last made at Beth Maacah—perhaps from some connection it may have had with Maacah, the mother of Absalom—and thither Joab pressed, to crush the insurrection if possible at a blow. A huge wall or bank of earth was forthwith thrown up round the town to prevent egress or ingress, and a deep ditch dug close to the walls to undermine them. A woman of the place, however, calling to Joab, as he passed, brought matters to a favourable crisis before an assault was delivered. Quoting an old local saying, “Act on the advice of the men of Abel, and you are sure to succeed,”² she urged him to communicate with

¹ *Robinson*, vol. iii. p. 372.

² *Thenius* (in effect). See Lenormant, *La Divination*, pp. 19–20.

them. "We are peaceful and faithful," said she, "and you seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why will you destroy the inheritance of Jehovah?" Repudiating such a desire, Joab consented that if Sheba were delivered up, he would raise the siege at once. It was enough. In a short time the head of the arch-rebel was thrown contemptuously over the wall, and the trumpets thereupon sounded the recall, leaving the city forthwith in peace. One death had extinguished the whole movement, lately so threatening.

The suppression of the two rebellions of Absalom and Sheba took place apparently about ten years before David's death, but we know hardly anything of his life during that period. The ten concubines whom his son had dishonoured were set apart, in virtual widowhood, till their death; the strict laws of Eastern usage demanding that they should be so. Beyond the intimation of this, these last years of David are veiled in almost complete silence. But if it be true that the nation with no history is happy,—since to have one means, largely, war and inquiet,—the very silence is a mark of the calm close of his reign. His last trial had been surmounted. He had bitterly atoned for his errors, and the discipline had made him a wiser man. The lofty spirit and the resignation with which he had met his troubles, and the victorious humility and penitence with which he had emerged from them, were a pledge that the rest of his life would be that of a true hero of God. A harsh experience had also taught men the folly of rash hopes from revolution, and had thus united them with greater heartiness than ever before, in support of a king whose true worth and greatness had been proved by his whole reign.

The evening of David's life seems, hence, to have passed

in the quiet development of the kingdom and empire; being the way thus prepared for the magnificent reign of Solomon. More than ever living close to God, the great thought of the now aged king's heart appears to have been to accumulate treasures of all kinds for a great Temple to be built by his son; he himself not being permitted to raise it. The dark clouds had at last broken away, and his sun was moving towards its setting in a clear heaven. One short break in the calm, at the very close of life, alone disturbed his peace.

The hardships of his early life; his exposure in his wars; the troubles in his family; Amnon's crime and his murder; Absalom's revolt and death, and his own bitter regrets at his sin in connection with Uriah and Bathsheba, had told on his strength, and left him a worn-out old man before he was seventy. His life gradually freezing at its source left him utterly enfeebled and helpless. His mind still retained its clearness and strength. It was evident, however, that death was near, and this was the signal for a new palace conspiracy. Adonijah, the son of Haggith, who had been born to David at Hebron, and was thus a man of between thirty and forty, had become, by the death of Absalom, the heir to the throne; if the succession were determined by strict descent. Like his elder half-brother, he was famous at once for his manly beauty, and by showing no fitness for the throne, intellectually or otherwise.¹ Following his example, he had for some time affected regal state, in chariots, horses, and running footmen; but his father, always weakly blind to the faults of his children, shut his eyes to these dangerous assumptions, as he had, before, to the faults of Amnon and Absalom. Joab, now

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. vii. 4, says he was just such a man as Absalom had been.

stained with two murders—those of Abner and Amasa—though still loyal as ever to David, had never looked kindly on Solomon; recalling as his birth did the dark fate of the noble-hearted Uriah and the shameful behaviour of Bathsheba. He had favoured Absalom rather than this youngest prince, and now that Absalom was gone, his sympathies passed to Adonijah, the next heir. Abiathar, representative of the younger branch of the priesthood, perhaps from scruples of conscience at supporting the child of so unworthy a marriage, but, it may be, from the fact that Zadok, his brother high priest, was in the lad's favour, leaned also to the eldest living prince. The evident unfitness of Adonijah to reign, however, and the promising gifts of Solomon, who had been apparently brought up under the care of Nathan, the prophet, led the wisest of David's counselors strongly to espouse that prince's cause. Shimei, a surviving brother of the king,¹ and Hushai, his "friend;"² Zadok, the representative of the elder branch of the priesthood; Benaiah, himself a priest, and also captain of the body guard, and Nathan, were determined that he should be king. David, moreover, had sworn to Bathsheba to appoint him his successor, and, as we are expressly told, Providence had ordained his being so. Adonijah's party, however, had attracted, through Joab, the support of the king's guards, of the captains of of the army of Judah, and of the sons of David as a body.³ The conspiracy had at last come to such a head that Adonijah fancied he might take overt action. The chiefs of his party were, therefore, invited to a

¹ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 266.

² 1 Kings i. 8. Thenius reads "Hushai" for "Rei." So *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 297.

³ 1 Kings i. 18, 10, 25.

sacrificial feast, intended as that of his inauguration. The spot chosen for it was the Fuller's Spring, in the valley of Kedron, outside the city walls; the spring supplying the necessary water for the sacred rites, and a great stone serving for a natural altar. But, unfortunately for Adonijah, Nathan had heard of the scheme on the day when the feast was to be held. Hastening instantly to Bathsheba, he informed her of the facts, and urged her to go to David and tell him, so as to save her own life and that of Solomon. Both would be taken if Adonijah succeeded. Acting on his counsel, she forthwith approached the king, and after lowly prostration, reminded him of his oath that Solomon should sit on his throne, and told him of Adonijah's plot. Nathan coming in while she was yet speaking—after the same humble obeisance—corroborated her words. David, feeble as he was, saw the whole situation at a glance, and took action with all his old promptness and vigour. Renewing his promise to Bathsheba with a solemn oath by "Jehovah who hath redeemed his soul out of all distress,"¹ he ordered Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah into his presence, and commanded them to set Solomon on the well known royal mule,² and lead him to Gihon, a spring on the west of the city. There Zadok and Nathan were to anoint him king over Israel, announcing their act by trumpet blasts and shouts of "God save king Solomon." Finally, they were to bring him back to Jerusalem and set him on

¹ 1 Kings i. 29.

² Thenius has Gibeon, but it does not seem to suit as well. Adonijah had held his feast at the Fuller's Spring; Solomon was to be anointed at Gihon; the ceremonies at both places being religious acts, accompanied by sacrifices to propitiate God, and hence in each case held near a spring, for the necessary ablutions, etc. The same feeling led the "places for prayer"—the Jewish *proseuchae*—chosen near water, to be adopted in the early Church (Acts xvi. 13).

the throne, as a formal sign that he had been appointed king with his father's official sanction. This vigorous action decided the matter at once. Issuing with Solomon, on David's mule, escorted by the Crethi and Plethi—the personal guard of David—Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah proceeded to Gihon. There Zadok solemnly anointed the young prince with a horn of sacred oil from the Tabernacle at Gibeon, of which he was guardian, amidst the blasts of trumpets and the shoutings of the multitude; Nathan assisting in the ceremonies as Prophet. The return to Jerusalem was in keeping with this auspicious commencement. Vast crowds joined the procession with music, dancing, and loud rejoicings,¹ which re-echoed over the city walls to Ain Rogel, where Adonijah and his party were now ending their feast, before proceeding to hail their chief as king. The news of Solomon's coronation, of his having been seated "on the throne of the kingdom," and of the court having already accepted him and done homage to David for his choice, fell like a thunderbolt on the conspirators. In a few moments the hall was empty, and Adonijah had fled to the Tabernacle, to catch hold of the horns of the altar,² as a sanctuary from Solomon's anger. His fears, however, were groundless; for Solomon, with his instinctive wisdom, and perhaps with a feeling of kindly clemency towards a half-brother, sent to assure him that, if he came and did homage, and henceforth acted more prudently, he would not be hurt.

The Book of Chronicles happily furnishes us with a few additional glimpses of the last months or weeks of David's life. His preparations for the temple which Solomon was

¹ 1 Kings i. 40. *Heb. and Sept.*

² Perhaps the great brazen altar at Gibeon; perhaps that on which sacrifices had been offered on Mount Zion.

to build, continued to the end,¹ and were still his chief thought. Skilled workmen not being found among the Hebrews, he gathered all the Phenician masons his officials could meet with in Israel, and set them to hew stones. Cedar trees were brought on Phenician rafts to Joppa, and then laboriously dragged to Jerusalem up the steep rough wadys. Iron, perhaps from the mines of Macedonia and of the Black Sea, was bought in Tyre; and the spoil accumulated in the Syrian wars supplied immense quantities of the precious metals. The House of Jehovah was to be "exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all lands,"² and vast preparations were, therefore, required. Not only did he further give a solemn charge to Solomon to carry out his wish in this particular; the heads of the tribes, gathered, with the priests and the Levites, in special assembly,³ were urged to support him with their utmost zeal. Nor did even this exhaust the interest of the king in this direction. A great convocation was held, attended by the princes of the tribes, the leading officers of the army, the chief men of the royal estates, of the Crethi and Plethi, and of the Gibborim.⁴ At this, David collecting his failing energies, rose once more to his feet and earnestly exhorted all to promote his cherished desire. Solomon, who was present, was also touchingly reminded of his duties, and again cautioned that all his glory and security depended on his leading a godly life. Full plans of the temple buildings, and the whole of the treasures amassed for their construction, were likewise formally made over to him. Nothing could be finer than David's closing words: "Be strong and of good courage; do not fear nor be dismayed. For the Lord God, my God, will be with

¹ 1 Chron. xxii. 14.² 1 Chron. xxii. 5.³ 2 Chron. xxii. 17; xxiii. 2.⁴ 2 Chron. xxviii. 1.

thee. He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the House of the Lord.”¹ Then turning to the assembly, he reminded them that the “the work was great, for the palace was not for man, but for the Lord God,”² and modestly recounted his contributions towards it. Such an example, from one so honoured, roused the spirit of all, and gifts were offered for the great undertaking with a splendid liberality. The assembly could not be allowed, however, to break up from its last audience of the great king without receiving his priestly blessing, for to the end of his life he was the priest no less than the prophet. Spreading out his withered hands, as we may suppose, those nearest heard the majestic words; the choirs of the priests and Levites, it may be, intoning parts of it in their choicest music.

“Blessed be Thou, Jehovah, the God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; yea, all that is in heaven and in the earth. Thine, Jehovah, is the kingdom, and Thou art exalted over all, as Head. Both riches and honour come from Thee, and Thou reignest over all; in Thy hand are power and might; in Thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and sing praises to Thy glorious name. For who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is no hope of abiding here. Jehovah, our God! all this store that we have prepared to build Thee a house for

¹ 1 Chron. xxviii. 20.

² 1 Chron. xxix. 1.

Thy holy name comes from Thy hand, and is all Thine own. But I know, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness; therefore, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things. And now have I seen with joy Thy people here present offer willingly to Thee. O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep it ever in the inmost thoughts of Thy people to build Thee a temple, and to direct their heart towards Thee. And give to Solomon, my son, an undivided heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to carry out all, and build Thee the palace¹ for which I have prepared."²

The occasion of such a great gathering of the heads of the nation seems to have been used for a second and more public consecration of Solomon as king. The grand benediction ended, David called on those present to "bless the Lord their God; and all the congregation blessed Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and did reverence to God and to the king." Great sacrifices followed, and then a grand coronation feast, at which the whole assembly, as representing the nation, hailed Solomon as the king of their choice, and he was anointed before them a second time. The liberties of Israel had been left undisturbed by the great hero-king, and its vote was still needed to make the succession legitimate and unquestionable.

A few notices of the last words of David embrace all that we further know of his life. His final counsels to Solomon, as given in the Book of Kings,³ are a vivid illustration of the grandeur of his conception of kingly duty, and at the same time of the imperfect ideal of

¹ *Lit.* fortress.

² 1 Chron. xxix. 10-19.

³ 1 Kings ii. 2-9.

religion as yet attained even by such a man. Nothing could be loftier than the principles marked out for the new king as those in which he should act. He was to be strong, and show himself a man, and keep the charge of Jehovah his God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes and His commandments, His judgments and testimonies, as written in the Law of Moses. Such a course only, he was reminded, had the Divine promise of blessing, and would secure the throne to his children. The sons of Barzillai, the Gileadite, were commended to his favour, in remembrance of their father's kindness when David was at Mahanaim. Then followed two strangely contrasted injunctions, breathing too much, as it would seem, the dark and imperfect spirit of the age. Joab had served David with a grand loyalty for many years, but he had been stained with the guilt of two murders, those of Abner and Amasa. Yet David himself had acted as wickedly in regard to Uriah, and Joab's services in the revolt of Sheba had saved the throne after Absalom's death. But the lifelong thralldom in which the fierce soldier¹ had kept him, and the crimes by which he had retained his place as commander-in-chief, had filled the king's mind with a dislike of him which nothing could abate. Solomon was therefore charged not to let his hoar head go down to the grave in peace, an injunction only too likely to be obeyed now that the veteran had supported Adonijah. Shimei, also, who had cursed the king so fiercely at Bahurim, but had

¹ 2 Sam. iii. 39. Joab, with Abishai and Asahel, were sons of Zeruiah, and thus nephews of David. 2 Sam. ii. 18; iii. 39; viii. 16. 1 Chron. ii. 16. On this point, see the note to page 124. Schenkel, a very acute critic, thinks she was David's sister. Winer leaves it an open question, whether she was his sister or step-sister. *Dict. of Bib.*, art. *Zeruiah*. *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 716, etc.

afterwards extorted an oath from him that his life would be spared,¹ was left to be put to death when Solomon ascended the throne.

While we feel that such death-bed curses are sadly out of keeping with our ideal of the last hours of a saint, it is very certain that David deserved the name if any man ever did, in such a position, amidst such temptations, and in such an age of twilight revelation and imperfect civilization. Let us once more remember that the recognised morality of the Jewish religious world, even a thousand years later, held that we should love our neighbour and hate our enemy. Man first heard from the lips of Christ that he was to love his enemies, and pray for them who despitefully used him.² But David's "last words," as recorded, have the note of true godliness, amidst all the imperfections of his remote times.

"The saying of David, the son of Jesse;

The man who was set over Israel;

The anointed of the God of Jacob;

He who sang sweet psalms for Israel.

The Spirit of God spoke in me,

His word was upon my tongue:

The God of Israel said,

The Rock of Israel spake to me:

'When one rules justly over men;

Rules in the fear of God—

It is like the going forth of light in the morning, without clouds;

Like the shining of the sun after long trouble of the rain—

When the tender grass springs out of the earth,

And the earth grows green in the brightness.'

Yea, is not even my house thus before God?

Because it is so, He has made an everlasting covenant with me,

Established and preserved for all time.

¹ 1 Kings ii. 7. The oath was not binding under a new reign.

² Matt. v. 43.

Yes, all my salvation and all my desire,
Will He not make them flourish !

But evil rulers are worthless thorns which He thrusts away;
Which cannot be taken hold of with the hand :
He who would touch them
Must prepare himself with iron,
And with the shaft of a spear :
With fire shall men burn them up.¹

Like the relics of our own Black Prince at Canterbury, or of Henry the Fifth at Westminster, David's arms, the spears and shields of his battles, and his swords, including doubtless that of Goliath, were preserved for ages in the Temple, with jealous care, as sacred memorials of the past.²

According to Josephus, David was seventy years old when he died. The unbending rule, by which burials were required to be made outside the walls of cities or towns, was deservedly relaxed in the case of one so illustrious. A great many-chambered tomb had been hewn out in the city-hill, with fitting external adornment, and there he was laid, doubtless with much pomp and amidst universal lamentation. At his side were gradually gathered a long succession of descendants. As late as the time of Christ, a spot so sacred was still fondly pointed out at Jerusalem.³ Josephus says, indeed, that one of the chambers of the royal tombs had been broken open by Hyrcanus, and another by Herod, in search of wealth, which tradition affirmed to have been hidden in them by Solomon ; but they were still intact, and worshipped, as Dio Cassius tells us, with the greatest reverence till the siege of the city under Hadrian, when they were thrown down like the other public buildings.⁴ The cave in

¹ *Ewald. Graetz. Eisenlohr.*

³ Acts ii. 29.

² 2 Kings xi. 10.

⁴ *Dio Cassius*, lxi. 14.

which the royal bodies lay could not, however, have been affected by the destruction of the architecture connected with it, but doubtless lies buried under the rubbish which covers even the Jerusalem of the Romans to a depth of about twenty feet. Some day, perhaps, it may be discovered, but meanwhile no one can tell with precision in what spot it may be expected to be found.¹

The greatness of David was felt when he was gone. He had lived in harmony with both the priesthood and the prophets; a sure sign that the spirit of his government had been thoroughly loyal to the higher aims of the theocracy. The nation had not been oppressed by him, but had been left in the free enjoyment of its ancient liberties. As far as his power went he had striven to act justly to all.² His weak indulgence to his sons, and his one great sin besides, had been bitterly atoned, and were forgotten at his death in the remembrance of his long-tried worth. He had reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem, and seven and a half at Hebron.³ Israel, at his accession, had reached the lowest point of national depression; its new-born unity rudely dissolved; its territory assailed by the Philistines. But he had left it an imperial power, with dominions like those of Egypt or Assyria. The sceptre of Solomon was already, before his father's death, peacefully owned from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, and from the Orontes to the Red Sea. In the blaze of so much glory the few spots in his reign were lost, and as generations passed he became more and more the ideal of a great and

¹ A tomb is exhibited at Jerusalem as that of David, but it is apocryphal. It is a huge sarcophagus of rough stone, covered with rich cloths, and standing in a small chamber. *Miss Barclay*. See *Rep. Pal. Fund*, 1881, p. 97.

² 2 Sam. viii. 15.

³ 2 Sam. v. 5.

good king. Nor was such reverent honour undeserved. Devout and lofty in his aspirations, even in his youth, he had shown his bent, while still with Saul, by seeking the society of the prophets,—and the child had been the father of the man. In his ripe manhood, amidst great wars and the burden of a wide empire, he had borne himself as a true prophet, and he continued unchanged in this respect to the last. Not that he publicly came forward in this character, or that he even wished to claim it, far less to make it a source of power and influence; it was an irresistible impulse of his inner life. He might have reigned in honour and closed his life in peace without such a prophetic enthusiasm, but its presence raised him to a glory all its own. The Psalms in which he breathes out his inmost thoughts during the revolt of Absalom, are replete with true religious fervour, glowing alike in its love and in its indignation. Conscious of his election as king by God, his words embody an intense bitterness towards enemies, who, in rising against him, are opposing the Divine will; but they also breathe a lowly resignation, and pass naturally to supplications for all the godly.¹ The song of thanksgiving for the restoration of spiritual peace after his agony of remorse for his great sin shows the same devotional exaltation. But this frame is seen nowhere more vividly than in his last words, which announce his confidence that his house, as firmly established in God, will flourish after his death.² No prince, especially no one whose kingdom had come to him without any hereditary claim on his part, could close his life with a brighter and more confident anticipation of the distant future.

The life of David, in fact, illustrated that spiritual development which had been advancing in Israel for

¹ Ps. iii. iv.

² 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7.

more than a century, since the early days of Samuel. The times had demanded a man who should be only in a subordinate degree a spiritual leader. The greatest need of the day was to complete the political work left imperfect since the days of Joshua; to secure in permanence a fatherland for the nation, and to unite all its hitherto isolated sections. Thus only could full independence and peace be attained for the future advancement of the true religion, entrusted to Israel on behalf of mankind. The youth of the nation must pass into manhood before it could accomplish the high task divinely assigned it. Only a warrior could bring about such a state of things, but it was imperative that he should, besides, be a man penetrated with the religious spirit. Such a hero appeared in David, who, rising from among the people, was marked by trust in God as his chief strength, by deep sympathy with the prophets, in whom lay the hope of the future, and by the tenacity with which he honoured all the great spiritual characteristics of his race. The religious movement in the community as a whole, in fact, received a new impulse from his influence and example.

The success of such a career was striking. Israel, for the first time, rose to be a nation, and gained permanent possession of its own country, after which it had striven in vain from the time of Moses. All the distinctive marks of an independent and united people henceforth displayed themselves among them. David was at once a warrior and a poet; a ruler, yet honouring the wishes of his subjects; a man of the people, and also, when necessary, a priest;¹ a powerful king, who still, without compromising his dignity, listened to the prophets of the day and acted in perfect agreement with them. All

the peculiarities of his race were, in fact, reflected in him. It was, moreover, a great advantage that he was neither a prophet by profession nor a born priest, but strictly a layman. Priests and prophets had made Israel the "people of God," but it was reserved for one from the general community, to set the nation on a firm basis and open to it an unlimited future. The manhood of the race was thus ennobled; for every citizen, in his sphere, could be loyal to what one of themselves had so successfully established. The surviving institutions of the past could no longer be used to injure the State, though all that was good in them was perpetuated. Even the humblest Israelite might cherish the loftiest aspirations. The rule of a priesthood, cramping the spiritual life of the nation, was impossible, and on the other hand the Prophet, in his office of tribune of the people and spokesman for God, had his claim recognised to advise the king in his guidance of affairs. The ideal of the theocracy had been realized when David and the Prophets thus worked harmoniously together. Such a king necessarily coloured the whole future of his country. The promises given to him of permanent and world-wide dominion¹ were cherished by subsequent generations as an unfailing trust, in the darkest days of the nation. A ruler descended from David, the promised Messiah or Anointed of God, would, infallibly, rise again and restore the kingdom to Israel. The only question was *how* Israel was to take the lead of the world. That it was destined to attain it was a firm belief in every heart.² The Messianic hopes grew into definite form from David's lifetime.

To the world at large he is especially dear as the "Sweet Singer of Israel." There had been no room for poetry in

¹ 2 Sam. xvii. 12, 14, 23, 27. Ps. lxxii. 8-11.

² *Ewald*, vol. iii. pp. 265-275.

the early Mosaic ritual,¹ and its absence is, indeed, a proof of the antiquity of the Mosaic institutions. Samuel had introduced music and minstrelsy in connection with public worship, but it was left to David to develop them, as only a man of his genius, vested with kingly power, possibly could. His harp is as natural an accompaniment of his presence² as the staff was to Moses or the spear to Saul. The Talmud has a tradition that it hung over his bed, and gave forth its sounds at midnight when the wind passed through its strings.³ As has been noticed already, singing men and singing women were permanently attached to his court, and musical instruments were invented by him.⁴ To such a delight in music, united with the gifts of a poet, we owe the origin of the Psalter. It was natural for him to utter his thoughts in song, and his devotion made that song religious.

As it now stands, only a portion of the Book of Psalms claims David as its author. Other inspired poets in successive generations added, now one, now another contribution to the sacred collection, and thus, in the wisdom of Providence, it more completely reflects every phase of human emotion and circumstances than it otherwise could.

The power of the Psalter over the minds and hearts of men in all ages, springs, indeed, in great part from its many-sided presentation of spiritual experience. This breadth and universality of influence illustrated throughout, is especially seen in the case of David. His early years stored his soul with the imagery of nature, and drew out his sympathies with man as man. His life in the camp brought him into contact with various nations, widening his ideas, and kindling the virtues of a brave

¹ *Ewald*, vol. i. p. 511.

² *Dict. of Bib.*, art. *Harp*.

³ 1 Sam. xvi. 23; xviii. 10.

⁴ 2 Sam. xix. 35. Amos vi. 5.

and self-reliant struggle. His throne made him familiar with the conception of supreme majesty and power. His simple and lowly youth kept him humble to the last. His sufferings and trials disciplined all his graces. His long abode amidst the lonely vastness and silence of the wilderness brought him face to face with God. The crowded streets of Jerusalem brought life under his eyes in its thousand occupations and contrasts. In the troubles in his household he felt the whole circle of parental emotions. His own failings taught him the pain and the bliss of contrition and amendment, and his lofty communion with God made him the interpreter for all time of those who aspire to imitate his devotion.





CHAPTER XIV.

PALESTINE IN SOLOMON'S DAY.

THE reign of David, which had raised Israel from the lowest state to the splendour of a great empire, necessarily gave a great impulse to the whole national life. Hitherto it might boast of its forefathers, and of the deeds of Joshua and its heroic Judges, but now its self-consciousness was raised to the highest in the pride of its new strength and glory. As Greece reached her grandest after the Persian wars—a struggle in which the deepest interests of the race had been involved, and a hearty co-operation of hitherto isolated fragments had given for the time a lofty feeling of national unity—so, among the Hebrews, the wars of David led to a great advance of popular life in every direction. Israel had now gained its highest wishes as a nation: the apparent extinction of tribal jealousies and disputes; a worthy place and commanding respect among the peoples around, and marked external prosperity. It had, besides, the ennobling conviction that all these great deeds had been achieved in the fulfilment of a divinely appointed destiny. It regarded its wars as undertaken not for policy, or ambition, but in obedience to the will of God,—a belief which bound all together in a common pride and enthusiasm.

But such religious and intellectual excitement naturally expressed itself in varied forms. Among others it resulted in the literary development of the times, of which David in his widely diffused psalms was the most characteristic illustration, and these lyrics led the way, under Solomon, to a much wider activity in the same direction. Not only religious, but secular poetry flourished, and historians commemorated the story of the past.¹

Yet there was a darker side to the picture, threatening the national future, if not carefully watched. The religious ideas of even the noblest were still, in some directions, far below the pure and lofty standard demanded by God. The harsh exclusiveness and contemptuous pride with which other nations were regarded, prevented Judaism from being a gospel of peace and love to mankind at large. The gentle spirit of Christian charity was needed, to discountenance the dark revenges and relentless cruelty at times shown even by such a man as David. The outer forms of religion, moreover, were still bound up with ritual precept and ceremony, at every step; a state of things in which lay a great danger of the triumph of the external over the essential; for Ritualism in all ages tends directly to ossify and destroy the higher life of a faith. A few of the loftiest spirits might realize a noble religious ideal, but the conceptions of the mass continued gross. The sun might illuminate the mountain tops, but its beams did not yet reach the valleys. If even a princess like Michal had her household god, the common people would long retain other superstitious usages, and readily yield to corrupting influences from without.

The new political position of the country had dangers

¹ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. i. p. 174.

of its own. The establishment of a Hebrew empire might have advantages, but it was yet to be seen how such a change would affect the spirit of the theocracy. The throne might become despotic, like the thrones around, and thus come into collision with the genius and liberties of the nation. It might forget the true calling of Israel, and involve itself in high politics and schemes of conquest. The chief priest, moreover, and the public ordinances of religion, were virtually dependent on the king. Zadok was appointed, Abiathar displaced, by his word, and the centre of public worship was at Jerusalem, where, also, the upper classes of the priesthood lived under the shadow of the palace. The glow and spirituality which marked the reign of a king like David might only too easily pass into cold formalism and lifeless hypocrisy under a worldly monarch. And should the throne, no longer looking to the people, give itself up to the pursuit of outward splendour, political power, and aggrandizement, the simple religion of Israel might readily be undervalued, in comparison with the faith and morals of the great heathen nationalities around.

Under David the people of Israel had lost their previous isolation from the surrounding idolatrous communities, and had thus entered on that critical time in the history of a nation, when it passes from the narrow circle which had previously contented it, into relations with the world at large. Such a stage is the counterpart of youth leaving the quiet of the family for the wider sphere of manhood; a time which determines whether it will nobly resist the hurtful influences around or yield to them; whether it will grow to manly strength of character or prove weak; purify and ennoble, or debase itself; rise or sink. National life, in the same way, may

become richer, more various, more stirring by a similar transition; may rise to a higher and clearer self-consciousness, or may darken and be corrupted. Instead of continuing a nation of shepherds and farmers, Israel was about to enter on the pursuits of trade and commerce, and be brought into contact with mankind at large. The monotony and uniformity of the past were henceforth impossible. But such a new sphere of many-coloured stirring life, at home and abroad, is perilous to the spirit of any nation. It endangers the simplicity of its faith, and is apt to lead to a depreciation of its best peculiarities and its ancient virtues. What is foreign attracts, what is native seems tame and rustic; family life, the basis of healthy national life, loses its former sacredness; and simplicity, discipline, and morals ere long decay, if the expansion of public activity be not well guided and sound. Some communities in their passing to manhood begin to decline, others to advance to a nobler future.

At the accession of Solomon, Israel had reached this critical period. Hitherto, like the original cantons of Switzerland, it had led a secluded life among its mountains. Only the north and north-western tribes of Dan, Issachar, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, had come much into contact with the great outer world, which then, in Palestine, was represented by the Phenicians. To a large extent they lived among that people, and were associated with them as farmers and farm labourers, caravan drivers, sailors, boatmen, and other humble occupations.¹ The middle, south and eastern tribes,

¹ Mövers, *Phönizier* vol. ii. i. p. 308. Jud. i. 29-33; v. 17. Gen. xlix. 20. Eisenlohr thinks the words in our version, "he shall yield royal dainties," mean that Asher purveyed delicacies for the table of the court, at Tyre. *Gesch.*, vol. ii. p. 6, see 1 Kings v. 14.

however, among whom Judah and Ephraim were the great centre of national force, retained a proud, rugged independence, which repelled all intercourse with heathenism,¹ and contented itself with its hereditary occupations of pasturage and farming.

Under David, the various tribes, almost against their will, had been drawn into closer relations with the communities around. From the time of Saul the struggle with their eastern foes, the Ammonites, had spread ever more and more widely. It had led to a coalition of that people, in David's reign, with the neighbouring Syrian powers, and compelled Israel to defend itself with all its energy against so threatening a confederacy. The result had been a succession of conquests and the subjugation of a number of foreign races, transforming the nation from political insignificance to a great ruling power. By the conquest of Edom they had come into immediate contact with the Egyptian empire. Through the defeat of the Syrians they had touched the Euphrates, and controlled the caravan roads from the East to Phenicia and Egypt. The old isolation from everything foreign was henceforth impossible; refusal to come in contact with the heathen must necessarily cease, if the conquests made were to be retained. Their retention, moreover, involved, or was thought to involve, a vital change in the military system of Israel. Horses and chariots were deemed indispensable, though the old infantry were still

For Dan, see Jud. v. 17. For Issachar, Gen. xlix. 14. They became serfs. For Zebulon and Naphtali, Deut. xxxiii. 18, 19. "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas and of treasures hid in the sand"—is a reference, apparently, to the collecting of the snail from which purple dye was prepared, and to fisheries, and glass-making.

¹ We see how they fought the Philistines, hating them, especially, as the uncircumcised.

the trust of the people at large. The ancient simplicity could not withstand the temptations and opportunities of national wealth and foreign example, and art and literature naturally followed the general elevation.

The influences of the higher civilization around were unfortunately in absolute opposition to the spirit of the pure religion of Moses. Art, culture, and morals, in the heathen communities, rested ultimately on a worship of the powers of nature associated with the grossest immorality. Hence a struggle arose from the first between the conservative element in Israel and the party of progress, and it continued through the whole future history of the nation, till Jerusalem perished. On the one hand stood the throne, intent, in too many cases, on reproducing and rivalling the institutions and culture of the heathen; on the other, the prophets, earnestly denouncing such departure from the genius of the theocracy; a struggle, the result of which in the end was to ruin the nation in its impossible attempt to reconcile contradictions. When heathenism had finally triumphed and carried off Israel to Babylon, an intense reaction set in amongst the exiles against everything idolatrous. But the dead externalism then adopted bore in it the seeds of its own certain overthrow, and thus involuntarily prepared the way for breaking down the arbitrary partition between the heathen world and the Jewish, by the spiritual liberty and all-embracing love of the gospel.

The country with which Israel, at Solomon's accession, came into closest contact, and by which it was most affected, was Phenicia; though it stood also in a fatally close relation to Egypt also.¹ The great routes of trade

¹ The following description of Phenicia and its institutions is mainly derived from Mövers, *Die Phönizier*, 2 vols.; the classical and exhaustive authority on the subject.

being now in the hands of the Jewish king, and the Phenician towns forming the great depots for the commerce of Palestine and Western Asia, the two peoples were inevitably drawn closely together. The result of this was early seen. Even under David, court life, including the creation of a harem, was largely modelled upon Phenician ideas.¹ Till then the relations to the Canaanites had been widely different. Friendly intercourse, however, henceforth increased in every direction, and soon showed its effects in all departments of public and private life. The religion, the politics, and the social and civil institutions and customs of Israel were henceforward more or less coloured by those of its mighty neighbour. It is important, therefore, even at the risk of trifling repetition, to understand what were the characteristics of the nation which thus so largely influenced the future of the people of God.

Phenicia, "the land of palms," was only a narrow strip of coast on the north-west of Palestine.² Thanks to the climate, it was very fertile. Lying under the shadow of Lebanon, it abounded in springs, streamlets, and rivers; the last then navigable for some distance from the sea, by the greater flow of water caused by the primeval forests which in those days clothed the neighbouring mountains. Berytus, now Beirût, and Tripolis, now Trablus, in the north, were especially fruitful, and in the south, the plains of Sidon and Acre had an equal reputation.

Hindered by the sea from farther advance to the west, the first settlers in these parts early laid aside the nomadic life. But their genius was not contented with the crops

¹ See David's employment of Phenician workmen and artists for his palace, etc. 2 Sam. v. 11.

² See vol. i. p. 249; vol. ii. 459.

or pasture of their fields or slopes. Traders by instinct, they applied themselves to commerce, recognising in the ocean along their coast a highway to unknown regions where they might hope to realize large gains. Providence in bringing a race so energetic to such a spot, had also provided all the natural aids it required to fulfil its great mission, of spreading the culture and ideas of the East to the still barbarous West. Phenicia alone, in Palestine, possessed timber for shipbuilding in rich abundance; the cedars and cypresses of Lebanon offering supplies so large as enabled it to export them even to other countries. The mountains furnished iron, so indispensable for ships, and the neighbouring plains grew splendid hemp and flax for ropes and sails. Unprovided with bays, creeks, and anchorages to the south, the coast abounded with them in the Phenician territory. In many parts, moreover, reefs extended parallel with the shore, creating natural havens, protected from the storms which often came with terrific violence from the south-west. Small islands formed by higher fragments of these rocks supplied, besides, places of refuge from the mainland in time of war, and secured the rich contents of the commercial magazines from sudden raids.

In addition to these advantages, Phenicia lay in the centre of the Old World, and was thus the natural entrepôt for commerce between the East and West. The trade routes from all Asia converged on the Phenician coast; the centres of commerce on the Euphrates and Tigris forwarding their goods by way of Tyre to the Nile, to Arabia, and the West; and, on the other hand, the productions of the vast regions bordering the Mediterranean, passing through the Canaanite capital to the eastern¹ world.

¹ Mövers, *Phönizier*, vol. i. pp. 83, 86.

Such a position developed numerous towns and cities on the Phenician coast. At its southern end lay the ancient royal city of Sidon;¹ the famous Tyre,² and Aradus. Farther north were Byblus, Berytus, Sin, Smyrna, and Arca; while Hamath, partly a Phenician city, flourished amidst a Hittite population,³ on the Orontes. From the time of the capture of Sidon by the Philistines,⁴ however, Tyre took the lead of all these cities, and hence touched most closely the history of Israel. Its position was eminently favourable. It was "situate at the entry of the sea," says Ezekiel, "a merchant of the people for many coasts." "Its borders were in the midst of the seas," for it stood in part on an island, and "its builders had perfected its beauty."⁴ "O Tyre," adds the prophet, "thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty." "I am a god, and a godlike throne have I in the midst of the seas."⁵ He can compare her to nothing more fitly than to one of her own great merchantmen or Tarshish ships, then the wonder of the world.⁶ The island was the seat of the national sanctuary—the temple of Melkarth, and ultimately the great centre of commerce. On the mainland the city was surrounded, except to the west, with a wide plain of unexampled fertility, watered by copious springs in all directions. Its fruits and vines were especially famous, and even the sugar cane flourished. This was old Tyre, renowned for its palace and its ancient temples. Its population may be judged from the circuit of the city being no less than eighteen miles. Gradually,

¹ Eisenlohr points out that Sidon meant the same as Bethsaida. *Das Volk Israel*, vol. ii. p. 1. See also vol. i. p. 248.

² Tyre = Tzur = rock, from the island on which part of the city was built. See p. 2.

³ Sayce, in *Trans. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. p. 270.

⁴ Ezek. xxvii. 3, 4.

⁵ xxviii. 2.

⁶ xxvii. 5.

however, the island, by its security, became a notable rival in its buildings and splendour. Islets near were joined to it to increase the space; the shallows round it filled up and incorporated with the city, and on the ground thus gained vast docks and warehouses stretched far and near, to meet the necessities of a gigantic commerce.

These wonderful enlargements of the island mark the brightest period in the history of Tyre, which was that also of the rise of monarchy in Israel.¹ But even then the Phenicians looked back on a remote past. "Its antiquity," says Isaiah, "is of ancient days."² According to Herodotus, indeed, it was founded 2,700 years before Christ.³ Sidon had held the foremost place among the cities of Phenicia before the entry of Israel into Palestine; and their religion and culture had even then spread amongst the Canaanitish peoples. Numerous colonies had been established already, but they were now largely increased. Cyprus, Crete, the islands of the Egean, Sicily, and Sardinia, were dotted with trade factories and settlements; and the coast of North Africa showed a line of Phenician towns.⁴ Touching at these, huge merchantmen from Palestine sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar to Tarshish, the Peru and California of those days, of which Gades, "the stronghold," now Cadiz, at the mouth of the Guadalquiver, was founded, as the great port. The shock of the Israelitish invasion, driving the Canaanite peoples to the coast, or forcing them to emigrate, had, apparently, led to this vast development of colonization.⁵

¹ From the 10th to the 11th century, B.C.

² Isa. xxiii. 7.

³ This is, of course, only traditional. Mövers, however, hesitates to challenge it; so ancient was the city. *Phönizier*, vol. ii. p. 134

⁴ Utica was founded about B.C. 1100.

⁵ Vol. ii. p. 403.

Till the days of Samuel,¹ however, the cities of Phenicia were still strong enough to defy the Hebrew invaders, and even to bring the northern tribes into more or less complete subjection. Meanwhile, about B.C. 1200, Sidon fell before the Philistines,² Tyre taking the lead, and growing, thenceforward, steadily greater, till in the time of David and Solomon its influence was supreme.³ Under Hiram I., the contemporary of these princes, it rose to its highest glory and power. A great change in the political constitution of Tyre had happened under his father. Instead of a government by Sufetes—the counterpart of the Hebrew Shophetim or judges—a monarchy had been established, which raised the city to supremacy. On this royal dignity Hiram entered at about the age of twenty. To beautify his capital was his great ambition. It was he who filled up the shallow edge of the sea to obtain additional space, and on this he built great temples and palaces, like those which his architects and workmen were afterwards to construct for Solomon in Jerusalem. The local idolatry, also, grew in splendour under his munificent patronage. Nor was he without his wars; for he conquered and annexed the island of Cyprus, perhaps for its copper.⁴

The victories of David, which hemmed in Phenicia by the new Jewish territories, and gave their ruler control of the trade routes from the East and to Arabia, naturally led Hiram to cultivate friendly relations with him and Solomon, since their hostility would have been a serious commercial injury. He, therefore, showed

¹ In Sirach xlv. 18, it is said that Samuel waged a successful war with Tyre.

² See p. 2.

³ 1 Kings v. 18; xvi. 31.

⁴ Copper was called Cyprian brass. Our word copper is the Greek Kupros (Cyprus); Low Latin, cuprum; German, Kupfer.

himself "ever a lover of David,"¹ and remained equally friendly with his son; though in his bearing to David, personal regard for so famous a man doubtless mingled largely with mere state policy. Among the first to greet him after the conquest of Jerusalem,² he had cheerfully supplied both materials and skilled workmen to build him a palace, and afterwards forwarded vast contributions for the construction of the proposed temple.³ It seems, in fact, as if all had been sent as a free gift, to gain David's favour, for there is no mention of anything paid in return.

Such an intimate relationship of Israel with a great heathen state could not fail to produce momentous results. From this time, indeed, Hebrew life, public and private, became gradually leavened with Phenician influences. The vast wealth and far-reaching commercial activity of the Canaanite community made itself felt in all directions. The accumulation of riches from world-wide trade, and from the plunder of helpless foreign coasts, led to a surprising development of luxury in Phenicia. All that could please the taste abounded in the mansions and palaces of Tyre. Her social magnates lived like princes, and knew no wish which they could not gratify. But along with the refinements of life, grosser indulgences held too much sway; the restless activity of the race alone preventing their growth to a dangerous degree.

The discovery of Tarshish, in Spain, had greatly affected the condition of the community.⁴ All accounts agree

¹ 1 Kings v. 1.

² 2 Sam. v. 11.

³ 1 Chron. xxii. 4. The metal, etc., in the preceding verses must also have come mainly from Phenicia.

⁴ The following paragraphs are based on Mövers' *Die Phönizier*.

as to the vast wealth they drew from it. In exchange for oil and worthless trifles, it is related, the first adventurers received more silver than their ship could carry, so that they made new ship gear of the precious metals, even to the anchors, leaving the old behind. The Grecian poets spoke of the river Tartessus as rising in a mountain of silver. Strabo says that Tarshish was surpassed by no region in its rich abundance of all blessings of the earth and sea. Neither gold nor silver, copper nor iron, were found elsewhere so pure or so plentiful. The gold was obtained both from mines and from washing the sand of the streams and rivers, and huge nuggets were not uncommon. Rock salt abounded. Cattle, and sheep producing the finest wool, wandered over the hill pastures in great herds and flocks. Grain and wine were local staples. The shores were rich in a large variety of the sea snails which produced the famous Tyrian purple, and the fisheries of all kinds were exhaustless. Wax, honey, pitch, and cinnabar¹ were also to be had in large quantities. Attracted by a land so rich, Phenician settlements soon covered the south and west coasts of Spain, and among these, even so late as the time of Strabo,² Cadiz, though founded on a small and poor island, was second to no other city in wealth, and to Rome alone in population. Sailing to the north, the Phenicians added to the Spanish trade that of the tin of Cornwall and the Scilly islands. From the coasts of the East Sea they obtained amber, of which, as early as the 10th century before Christ, they made costly necklaces and personal ornaments. From the mines of the island

vol. ii. pp. 1, ff.; *Die Colonien der Phönizier*; the article *Phönizier*, in *Ersch und Gruber*; and Dunker's *Geschichte*, vol. i. pp. 121, f.

¹ Native red sulphuret of mercury, known as vermilion.

² Born A.D. 19.

of Thasos, on the south of Thrace, they procured gold to the value of about a million a year.¹

Such a vast commerce necessarily developed a great activity in the arts and manufactures of Phenicia. Its people stood in the same relations to the Thracian, Greek, Sicilian, Libyan, and Spanish populations, as the Portuguese and Spaniards, to the natives of the East and West Indies, 2,500 years later. The richest treasures which the heroes of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* boasted—the drinking vessels of bronze and silver, “rich in invention,” and the many-coloured robes, which “shone like bright stars,”—were productions of Sidon. But the Phenicians traded not only in their own manufactures or art creations; their towns were the ports of Babylon and Nineveh. The commerce of the whole ancient world, from the Persian Gulf to the Pillars of Hercules, was gathered into the warehouses of Tyre. The overland trade with the east and south-east was as great as that by sea. A succession of Phenician colonies occupied points on the chief caravan routes. Of these, one ran by Baalbek, Emesa, and Hamath, to Thapsacus, on the Euphrates, and thence by Harran and Nisibis to the Tigris, Armenia, and Assyria, as well as down the river, to Babylon. Another stretched eastward by Tadmor, or Palmyra, and Circesium—Carchemish—to the same regions, passing over the plain of Esdraelon, and thence along the Philistine coast to Gaza, on the way to Egypt. Laish, on the north of Palestine, at the crossing of the roads from Syria, by Damascus, was a Phenician colony. We find traces of their factories, indeed, even on the Persian Gulf, where they intercepted the commerce of India, Africa, and Southern Arabia. The Delta in Egypt was called the Greater Phenicia from the number of

¹ From 200 to 300 talents yearly. A talent=about £3,900.

Phenicians long settled in it.¹ A constant stream of traffic passing to and fro made the name of Tyre a household word in every country.

Fortunately we have a picture of this restless and wonderful activity from no less trustworthy a source than the prophet Ezekiel.²

In his comparison of Tyre to one of her own magnificent ships, he describes her planks as of cypress wood from Senir;³ her masts as formed from cedars of Lebanon; her oars as of the oak of Bashan; her deck,⁴ inlaid with ivory, as of planks of larch from the isles of Chittim.⁵ Common linen would not do for her sails; they were of the finest, richly embroidered, from Egypt. The awning over her deck was dyed with the costliest blue and purple brought from the isles of Elishah.⁶ Men of Sidon and Arvad sat in the banks of the rowers; ship carpenters from Gebal sailed with her to stop a leak, if needed; and Tyre furnished the pilots.⁷

Leaving his metaphor,⁸ the prophet proceeds to describe the characteristics of the great city in plainer language. All the ships of the sea and their crews came to her docks, he tells us, to receive and deliver cargoes. Her armies were composed of mercenaries from the opposite ends of the earth; from Paras—perhaps Persia—and from Lud and Phut, remote parts of Africa. Men of Arvad and other brave warriors lined her walls, and hung their shields on her towers. She traded with

¹ See p. 210.

² Ezek. xxvii. 5-36.

³ The Amorite and also the Assyrian name for Hermon.

⁴ Smend's *Ezechiel*, p. 196. See also Schroeder's *Hezechiel*, p. 249.

⁵ The isles of the Mediterranean generally.

⁶ Greece. The best sea snails for producing the purple dye were obtained from the coasts of Laconia. *Smend*, p. 197.

⁷ These places were all Phœnician cities.

⁸ Ezek. xxvii. 2nd part of ver. 9.

Tarshish for silver, iron, tin, lead, and much else. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech¹—Greece, and Scythia—gave slaves and vessels of brass for her wares; Togarmah,² in Armenia, supplied her with horses, horsemen, and mules. On the far coasts of Africa her sons collected elephants' tusks and ebony. Syria, in its widest sense, sold to her merchants purple cloths, robes of different colours, fine linen, pearls from the Indian Ocean, and precious stones from the far East. Judah and the land of Israel gave them wheat, millet, date syrup, oil, and mastix, or terebinth balm. From Damascus came the wine of Helbon—the only wine drunk by Persian kings—and the white wool of the vast flocks of Eastern Palestine. Southern Arabia and the Syro-Arabian desert³ sent bright iron, cassia, and calamus⁴ for anointing-oil and incense. Trappings and fine cloths for horses and chariots came from distant parts of Arabia. Thence also were slowly driven flocks of lambs, sheep, and goats to the Tyrian markets. Sheba and Raamah,⁵ in the same vast peninsula, sent their perfumes, and precious stones, and gold; and places now unknown, throughout Mesopotamia and Babylon, sent caravans laden with bales of their costly dyed robes, purple embroidered mantles, carpets, tapestries, and tent cloths; whatever, in short, made the looms of Western Asia famous.

The political and social condition of Phenicia was peculiar. The different cities had kings, who boasted of

¹ See vol. i. pp. 233–4.

² Vol. i. p. 232.

³ Ezek. xxvii. 19. For Dan read Waddan, a town between Meccah and Medina. Read also Javan of Uzal, that is, Arabia: perhaps referring to travelling Greek merchants. *Smend*, p. 206. Javan = Ionians. See vol. i. p. 234.

⁴ Fragrant perfumes for anointing-oil and incense.

⁵ See vol. i. pp. 240–1.

great harems, and surrounded themselves with female singers and dancers. Their courts displayed a splendour from which Solomon copied his own kingly state. But, as in Israel, a council of elders, still associated with the throne, preserved the memory of its original limitations. The king was chosen, at least in theory, by this body, and the consent of the citizens. Despotism could never, therefore, reign unchecked, and hence Phenicia ranked next to Israel in the forms of popular liberty. The citizens, divided into trade guilds, took part in the government. The king, senate, and people, in certain cases acted together; the decision, in weighty cases, resting practically with the last. Usually, however, both king and people were oppressed by the nobles, who engrossed the public offices and thus held the chief power. The peasantry in the Phenician territory, whether foreign or native, were especially tyrannized over. The land was the property either of the king, the priesthood, or the nobles, and the cultivators were virtually serfs. Such privileges on the one hand, and inferiority on the other, led to habitual restlessness in the cities, the populations of which, intelligent by their trade pursuits, would not quietly submit to despotic treatment. Such a constitution could not compare with that of Israel, in which only the remnant of the Canaanites were enslaved; all Hebrews enjoying equal rights before the law, as free owners of the land and as citizens. But unfortunately these ancient liberties were hereafter to be seriously invaded, and the people brought more nearly to the level of the populations around, with their strong contrast of rich and poor, lordly and humble, noble and commoner.

In Phenicia, as in Israel, religion was under the supreme charge of a high priest, and formed a kind of

theocracy, of which the god Melkarth was king,¹ but the high priest was practically under the reigning monarch. His influence had originally been great, for he was the head of the aristocracy, controlled the wealth of the priesthood, and presided in all religious affairs. But being generally a brother of the king, political rivalry with the throne was thus avoided, and the king kept the real power in his own hands, dictating his pleasure in religion as well as in politics.

The Phœnician religion had originally been based on the belief in one supreme god, known to the whole Semitic race, as El.² He was at first identical with Bel, or Belitan—"Bel, the Eternal"—the first, highest, and only god. But this primitive belief was early corrupted, and sank to a gross and sensual worship of the heavens and the earth. Their gods—who were believed to reveal themselves and their work in the verdure of the trees, the beauty of flowers, the movements of animal life, in consuming fire, in the murmur of springs and streams, in the hills, in the glowing deadly simoom—in fact wherever nature spoke either of life or death—had their symbols and representatives in the lights of heaven. Thus had the mystery of the universe been interpreted by the Eastern fancy of these artless children of the early world. The Magian worship in Persia, represented still by that of the Parsees, retained its simplicity to later ages, permitting no symbol of the godhead but the sacred fire, and worshipping the sun or stars only in the open air or on the roofs of their dwellings.³ But the Phœnicians

¹ *Mövers*, vol. ii. pp. 532, 542.

² See vol. i. p. 335.

³ The temptations to such a worship under the unclouded skies of the East are noticed by Job xxxi. 26-28:

"Had I looked at the sun when it shone;
At the moon, walking in brightness;

gradually personified the powers of nature which they primarily ascribed to the stars, and symbolized them by idols, in connection with which a worship grossly cruel and sensual rose.

The supreme god among the Phenicians and Canaanites was the sun-god Baal, the Bel of the Babylonians, and the Zeus and Jupiter of the Greeks and Romans. His worship had been long established in Canaan before the Israelites entered it, and, indeed, as we have seen, they had been familiar with it among the Phenicians and Asiatic tribes in the Egyptian Delta.¹ The name was equivalent to "lord" and "ruler," for Baal governed the material universe. He was hence the theocratic king of men, having a right to their homage as his subjects, or, in the Eastern mode of expression, his slaves.² But the idolatrous use of the title prevented its adoption by the Hebrews, except as an indication of human dignity; its equivalent Adon or Adonai being always substituted by them in speaking of God.³ Baal was the great father from whom came the wool and flax; the bread and water; the oil, the wine, the corn, and all else which the earth yielded for the happiness and wants of man.⁴

Had my heart been so carried away in its thoughts
That I had sent a kiss with my hand to them,—
It would have been a punishable offence,
For I should have denied the God that is above."

¹ See vol. ii. p. 283.

² See 2 Kings x. 19, 21, 22, 23. The same word is used of the worshippers of Baal and of those of Jehovah, servants=slaves.

³ "Worshippers" is the same Heb. word as "servants."

⁴ Yet in private usage "Baal" seems at times to have been applied to Jehovah. Thus: "At that day, saith Jehovah, thou shalt call me Ishi (my husband); and shalt call me no more Baali (my Lord)." Hos. ii. 16.

⁴ Hos. ii. 5, 8.

“High places”—on the summits of hills and mountains—were especially sacred to him, for the sun shone longest on them, and they rose as it were into the midst of his full splendour. So deeply, indeed, had this reverence for heights entered into the religion of the age that they became equally sacred to the Hebrews, and were especially selected by them as holy till the Captivity.

Baal was the symbol of creative power, for the sun was the great generative force in nature. Originally worshipped without any image, and typified only by pointed stone pillars embodying an obscene symbol, he was ultimately represented in a human form, riding on a bull, with bunches of grapes and pomegranates¹ in his hands. The loftiest names were given him. He was the king of the universe, the light of the gods, their creator, and father. In different districts he was distinguished by such local names as Baal of Lebanon, or of Tyre, and he also bore various titles as the personification of particular powers of nature. Thus he was in different places Baal-zebub, the driver away of flies and other similar pests; Baal-gad, the source of good fortune; Baal-berith, the god of agreements or treaties. Or he was invoked by names designed simply to honour him, as Baal-shemesh, the sun-god; Baal-shemaim, “the lord of the heavens;” Baal-salah, the god of piercing rays; or Baal-zephon, the god who conquers darkness² and tames the fierce north wind, so dangerous to the Phœnician sailors.

Alongside this god stood his female counterpart—Asherah—the representative of fertility in general, and

¹ The pomegranate was sacred to Baal as a fit emblem of fertility from the many seeds it contained.

² Zephon = North, which was thought to be covered with perpetual darkness, in contrast to the sunny south.

particularly of the receptive and producing principle in the earth. Her symbol was the rough trunk of a tree with some twigs left on it, and this was raised alongside the pointed stone pillars of her consort. Sacrifices were offered to her in shadowy groves and on artificial mounds. Creatures sacred to her for their beauty, strength, or fecundity, were maintained at her sanctuaries, as in that at Paphos in Cyprus, where her temple grounds showed sacred goats, great flocks of sacred doves, and ponds of sacred fish. Some trees and fruits in the same way were consecrated to her for their fruitfulness, size, unfailing verdure, or early budding; among others the terebinth, the pine, the cypress, the pomegranate, and the almond-tree, which blossoms as early as January in some parts of Palestine.¹ Such trees were, indeed, held as her visible embodiment, and were worshipped as such. "They sacrificed upon the tops of the mountains (to Baal), and burned incense (to Ashera) upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because their shadow was good."²

But if Baal and Ashera were the symbols of the quickening and producing powers of nature, there were also representatives of its destructive forces. Moloch and Ashteroth were the emblems of the destroying principle before which the bloom of nature withered, and life in all its forms perished; and they were hence, also, the deities of war. Moloch—the king—was the sun in his fierce summer heat, scorching the pastures, drying up the streams, smiting the land with unfruitfulness and pestilence, and begetting poisonous winds. He was the consuming and destroying, but also the purifying fire. But

¹ Winer, *Mandelbaum*. See Isa. lvii. 5. Jer. ii. 20; iii. 6, 13; xvii. 2. Ezek. xx. 28.

² Hos. iv. 13.

the cold of winter, which as fatally arrested vegetation, was also his embodiment. When the cloudless heat of summer parched the seed and burnt up the springing corn, when plagues desolated the cities, when the calamities of war smote the land, it was his doing. The ox in his fierce untamed strength was sacred to him, and so was the wild boar, which the glow of summer excited to madness. He was hence represented in the form of an ox, or as a human figure with a bull's head. His worship was a hideous distortion of the primitive worship of fire. Among the Moabites he became Chemosh, the destroyer,¹ or Ariel, the fire-god; among the Ammonites, Malcom or Milkom,² whose worship Solomon sanctioned at Jerusalem,³ where at a later day, through Assyrian influence, it was again introduced and only too firmly established.⁴ In Tyre he was Baal Hammon—the god of the summer heat. His star was the planet Mars, from its appearing at different times, fiery, clear, or blood-red. He was honoured by stone fire-pillars in the form of an obelisk, and his image was carried about in a golden shrine. A numerous priesthood, in regular hierarchy, filled his temples, as in that built by Ahab in Samaria, which boasted 450 priests of Moloch, and 400 of Ash-toreth.⁵ Devotees were circumcised,⁶ and were known by shaving off their hair so that only a round crown was left, and by removing their whiskers and beard, in violent contrast to the custom of Orientals generally.⁷

¹ Num. xxi. 29. Jer. xlviii. 46.

² Jer. xlix. 1.

³ 1 Kings ii. 5, 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

⁴ 2 Kings xvi. 3; xxxiii. 20. Jer. ii. 23; vi. 13, 14; xix. 5; xxxii. 35.

⁵ 1 Kings xviii. 19.

⁶ *Eisenlohr*, vol. ii. p. 35.

⁷ Hence the Mosaic prohibition of making baldness on the head or shaving off the corners of the beard, in Lev. xix. 27; xxi. 5. See Dillmann, *Lev.*, p. 557.

Every firstborn male was consecrated to him as a human sacrifice,¹ or to enter his priesthood.

By the side of the grim idol stood Ashtoreth—the Greek Astarte—his female counterpart ; a virgin goddess—the queen of heaven ; visible, it was believed, as the moon.²

Thus, the friendly and hostile, the producing and destroying powers of earth and heaven, were opposed to each other in this strange religion. But as the Egyptians in the myth of Osiris conceived the beneficent god in conflict with the malignant, and saw in the process of vegetation and the course of the seasons his final conquest of evil, the Phenicians united the opposing fancies of the kindly and hostile powers—Baal and Moloch—in the person of another god. When the sun retreated to the depth of the heavens in winter, it became the Baal of Tyre, who as a conqueror led it back from the regions of summer heat and winter cold, to begin anew the beneficent labours of spring. When the sun appeared farthest off, Baal of Tyre was asleep or dead, till in the early spring, at the end of February or the opening of March, his awaking or resurrection was once more celebrated. When at its highest in the fierce summer, the god was consuming himself, that he might return, in new and vigorous youth, as the sun of harvest, to shed a milder

¹ The claim of God to have the firstborn child given to Him, to be redeemed only by a stipulated form, showed in effect that what the heathen held to be due to Moloch, was in reality due to Jehovah (Exod. xiii. 12 ; Lev. iv. 5 ; xviii. 21 ; xx. 2). These texts imply that, already, in Egypt, Israel had become familiar with human sacrifice—burning their firstborn to the Asiatic Moloch. For this, therefore, dedication of these to Jehovah was substituted. See *Lengerke*, p. 295. Also vol. ii. pp. 18, 277.

² 2 Kings xxiii. 4. Jer. vii. 18 ; xlv. 17.

light once more on the earth.¹ Known in Tyre as Melkarth, the king of the city, this god was its protector, as Ashtoreth was that of Sidon. King Hiram had introduced his special worship into the capital, or at least greatly developed it.² His temple was famous from the glittering gold which covered it, in imitation of the brightness of the sun. His image in it wore a golden beard, and two famous fire-pillars—one of pure gold, the other of Smaragdis stone, which shone by night—stood before it.

The Israelites were familiar with this mythical Sun-hero, no less than with the other forms of Baal worship. "Call louder," said Elijah to the heathen priests at Carmel, "for he is a god."³ "Perhaps he is meditating" (he was the god of wisdom), "or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he sleeps, and must be waked." He might possibly be away on his fabled journey to Libya, or Typhon might have killed him!

The myth of Adonis, who, it may be, was the same as Tammuz or Hadadrimmon⁴—another form of the Phenician worship—was equally spread through Israel.

¹ *Duncker*, vol. i. p. 167.

² *Mövers*, vol. ii. p. 386. The resurrection of Hercules was celebrated on the 25th December, about the time of the winter solstice, when the sun seems to die, but presently wakes, young again, from his death sleep.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 27.

⁴ Ezek. viii. 14. Zech. xii. 11. Von Baudissin thinks that Hadar-Rammon should be read for Hadadrimmon, and that this name was never given to Adonis. It means, apparently, "glorious is the exalted one." The letters "d" and "r" ד ר are constantly confounded in Hebrew MSS. See Baudissin, *Studien zur Semit. Religionsgeschichte*, Heft i. 1876. But Mövers, Merx, and Wellhausen think the Hadadrimmon, Tammuz, and Adonis legends and worship were interconnected.

Adonis¹ is nature in its highest glory and fruitfulness, to perish ere long by the burning heat of summer and the storms of autumn. Hence he was represented as a splendid youth who was killed in his early beauty by a wild boar. A widely spread public lamentation was held yearly in his honour when spring was passing into summer; ² the idea being to symbolize and mourn over the evanescence of all things earthly, and especially of human life. The festival began by a search, on the part of the women, for the lost Adonis. Its date was fixed in the north of Phenicia by the Adonis river growing red, through the earth brought down by the rains from the mountains. He had been killed, as they fancied, while hunting the wild boar on the hills, and it was his blood that reddened the stream. A wooden image of him, which had been hidden in an earthenware vessel, filled with mould and planted with wheat, barley, lettuce, and fennel—and known as the garden of Adonis—was made the object of a pretended search; the withering of the plants being regarded, in another legend, as symbolizing his having been slain by the fire-god Mars. When found, a seven days' wake began,³ with all the demonstrativeness usual in the East, and the license habitual to Syrian idolatry. The image was washed, anointed, put in a coffin and laid on a bier, which the priests bore round; their robes torn and their heads and beards shaven. The people sat on the ground with rent clothes; the women

¹ *Döllinger*, vol. i. p. 158, makes Adonis = the yellow reaped corn.

² The feast of Adonis is thought by Mövers to have been celebrated in the late autumn. The Rev. W. A. Wright, in art. *Tammuz*, in the *Dict. of the Bible*, thinks it was held about July at the time of the summer solstice.

³ *Amm. Marc.*, xx. 1.

cut off their hair,¹ mangled their breasts with knives, and pierced the air with wild howls, intermingled with loud cries of "Oi lanu"—Woe is me!² A shrill discord of piercing fifes³ added to the excitement, and the whole ended by sacrifices for the dead and the burial of the wooden figure. But a violent contrast to this lamentation was shown when the advancing green of a new spring proclaimed the god awaked once more from his mortal sleep. His resurrection was then celebrated with corresponding jubilation.⁴

Such a nature worship, if it had remained true to what we may conceive to have been its original simplicity,

¹ Hence forbidden to the Hebrew women. Lev. xix. 27, 28; xxi. 5. Deut. xiv. 1. Jer. xvi. 7.

² Literally, "Alas, to us!"

³ Matt. ix. 23.

⁴ "In Palestine, from the earliest time, a dualism of the godhead prevailed. For though the contrast of the wilderness and rank fertility is not so marked as in Egypt, yet the same hill often shows both. Mother earth, which from the opening of March celebrates with bright splendour the re-awakening of her Adonis and of the virgin soil, is very different from the scene which, from the end of May, shuts up all life in itself and lets no grass blade grow on the mountains. The spring heaven through which the mild air and warm sunshine breathe, after the cold of winter, is very different from the summer sky, which, pitilessly, month after month, sends down consuming heat. Then the springs dry up, the villagers anxiously guard the rainwater stored in their cisterns; the wanderer can cross the Jordan in many places dry-shod, and the hind pants in vain by the dried-up Kishon for running brooks." Furrer, *Geographie*, p. 7.

Of the Jordan between the Sea of Galilee and Bethshean, in summer, when Moloch was supposed to reign, we are told: "I am within the mark when I say that there are many hundreds of places where we might have walked across, without wetting our feet, on the large rocks and stones." Molyneux, *Journ. Roy. Geog. Soc.* vol. xviii. p. 115.

might have been a comparative innocent system. But, unfortunately, no moral or spiritual elevation was associated with it, and it had sunk to be an embodiment, under religious forms, of all that is most hateful and gross.

In its most prominent aspect it had indeed become a mere formal sanction of impurity. The Mylitta worship of Babylon¹ was vile enough, but the hotter blood of the Phenicians, and the sensuality of its great trading cities, carried similar abominations to excess. The central idea of the worship of the Ashera was lewdness. At the feasts of the goddess, and at that of the resurrection of Adonis, the high places, the sacred groves, the very roads, became scenes of universal prostitution; its gains being made over to the temple treasuries.² Every temple had, besides, at all times, great bands of women and mutilated men consecrated to impurity.³ The Syrian Baal-Hercules, a hermaphrodite idol, was worshipped with an exchange of dress by the sexes; the men appearing as women, the women wearing men's clothes and weapons.⁴

But where the grossest sensuality was thus sanctioned and even demanded by religion, the instincts of our nature naturally led, in many, to a terrible revulsion from such excesses. Hence, in despair to overcome the tendency towards them, wild fanaticism broke out into the most

¹ *Herod.*, i. 199.

² Hence the prohibition in Deut. xxiii. 18.

³ It is striking to notice that the words Kadesh (masc.) and Kadeshah (fem.), by which these unhappy beings were known, mean "holy" or "consecrated." The widow Tamar is called a Kadeshah, from the dress she assumed, so that the class she represented was well known in the days of Jacob. See Gen. xxxviii. 14. 1 Kings xiv. 24. 2 Kings x. 22. Jer. iii. 2. Hos. iv. 13, 14.

⁴ Hence the prohibition in Deut. xxii. 5.

revolting self-inflictions and mutilations. Men sought to atone for their former impurities by taking revenge on their own bodies, or by offering human sacrifices to appease the gods. The priests of Baal Melkarth, it will be remembered, slashed themselves with swords and daggers at the sacrifice on Carmel, to induce their god to hear them.¹ Self-mutilation was the highest and most acceptable offering to Ashtoreth.² "On the days when the festival of the Syrian goddess is held," says an ancient author, "a great crowd of priests³ and many Galli⁴ and

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 28.

² She was the Istar of Assyria, and the planet Venus was sacred to her, as well as the moon. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1874, p. 337.

³ On one occasion he saw 300 priests employed at one sacrifice.

⁴ Self-mutilated men. These Galli wandered through the country. The following is a description of a band of them. "A trumpeter went before them who proclaimed their arrival in the villages, the farmyards, or the streets of towns, by flourishes on his instrument—a twisted horn. The begging Galli followed in fantastic array, after a leader; an ass in their midst, carrying their begging bag* and a veiled image of the goddess. They were dressed in women's clothes of different colours; their faces and eyes painted like those of women, and their head wound round with a linen or silk turban. Their arms were bare to the shoulders, and they danced along the streets to the sound of wild music, holding huge swords and bills, with whips for scourging themselves, in their hands, and making a hideous noise with rattles, fifes, cymbals or kettle-drums. When they came to a farmyard they began their ravings. A wild howl opened the scene. They then flew wildly one past the other; their heads sunk low towards the earth, as they turned in circles; their loose hair dragging through the dust. Presently they began to bite their arms, and next to hack themselves with the two-edged swords they carried." It was such a dance that took place before Elijah at Carmel, and as was joined in by the emperor Heliogabalus, when, as priest of the Syro-Canaanite Sun-god, he

* They lived by begging, like the mendicant friars.

Kadeshim¹ take part in the rites, cutting their arms and lashing their backs, as they circle the altar in wild religious dances, amidst the din of flutes, cymbals, and songs to the god. Carried away by the wild excitement, not a few of the spectators lose all self-control, and, breaking into frenzy, mutilate themselves with a sword laid ready for the purpose."² What followed is unfit to be told. But so deeply did the revolting heathenism of Phenicia taint Israel in after years that Josiah found numbers of such wretched men established in the precincts of the Temple at Jerusalem, along with a body of women who openly wove tents for the impurities of the worship of Ashera.³

But still more terrible were the human sacrifices which marked this idolatry. Children were thrown by their

leaped round the altar to the loud music of many instruments.* Then began a new scene. "One of them, the leader in this frenzy, commenced to prophesy,† with sighs and groans, lamenting aloud his past sins, which he would now avenge by the chastisement of his flesh. He then took the knotted whip and lashed his back, cutting himself also with his sword till the blood ran down. A collection wound up the whole. Some threw copper money to them, or even, in some cases, silver. Others brought wine, milk, or cheese, which was greedily accepted, and stuffed into the sack on the ass, beside the goddess. . . ." In the evening, when they reached a caravanserai they made up for the bloody chastisements of the day by a debauch, and, if the opportunity offered, gave themselves up to every abomination. *De Dea Syra*, quoted by Mövers, vol. i. p. 681.

¹ Kadeshim is the masculine plural of Kadesh, a man consecrated (to impurity). See note, p. 363.

² *De Dea Syra*, § 15, 22, 27, 49-51.

³ 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

* A description of the dances of the dervishes in Egypt is given by Orelli, *Durch's Heilige Land*, p. 27, which very much resembles what is told of the dances round the altar of Baal.

† 1 Kings xviii. 29.

mothers from the top of the temple walls during the feast of Ashtoreth, to be afterwards burnt on the altar. It was in the worship of Moloch, however, that this fearful perversion of human instincts was most terribly seen. The Rabbis describe his image¹ as a human figure with a bull's head and outstretched arms, and this is



MOLOCH.

confirmed by Diodorus.² The huge figure, which was of metal, was made glowing hot by a fire kindled within it, and the children, laid in its arms, rolled off into the fiery lap below. The parents stilled the cries of the intended victims by fondling and kissing them—for their weeping would have been unpropitious—and their shrieks afterwards were drowned in the din of flutes and kettle drums.³ Mothers, says Plutarch, stood by, restraining

¹ *Jarchi, on Jerem. vii. 31.*

² *Diod., xx. 14.*

³ Von Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew, etc.*, vol. ii. p. 427.

all signs of grief, which would have lost them the honour of their sacrifice, without saving the children.¹

These hideous scenes were renewed each year on fixed days as an atonement for all the sins committed in the past twelve months. They also took place before great enterprises, or after great misfortunes. The more bitter the sorrow for the loss of an only son, the more pleasing the sacrifice to the god, and the greater its benefit. The numbers burned were sometimes very large. The Carthaginians, we are told, having lost a battle, it was ascribed to the anger of Moloch (Saturn), to whom boys from the noblest families had formerly been offered, instead of boys bought and fed up for the purpose, as had come to be the rule. An enquiry having been made, it was discovered that a number of parents had hidden away their sons, and therefore two hundred boys from the first families were offered at once together; three hundred others voluntarily giving themselves up afterwards, as free-will offerings for the good of their fatherland.²

It was with a religion so revolting, alike in its impurity and cruelty, that the pure worship of Jehovah had to contend, nor can its value to mankind be better realized than by the contrast they offered. The struggle between the two was one of life and death, for they could not exist together. Nor could any spectacle be of loftier interest for the history of our race than that which this sustained battle of light and darkness exhibited during the centuries after Solomon. Through these ages, the true religion continued to attack the foul abominations of heathenism with an invincible energy, a tenacious persistency, and an exhaustless enthusiasm, under the most unfavourable circumstances, till it not only gained the

¹ Plut., *De Superst.*, 13.

² Diod., xx. 14.

victory, but drove from its midst whatever could remind it of the idolatry it abhorred.¹

¹ The Assyrian tablets throw interesting light on the worship of Baal and the other gods and goddesses common to the Euphrates and Phenicia. A sacred calendar fixed the time of the various sacrifices and rites. On the feast of Anu and Bel—at the appearance of the new moon on the first night of the month Elul, the king offered a gazelle without blemish to the moon—"raising his hand at the high place of the god." Each day of the month was sacred to a particular god or goddess, or to a deity of each sex. On the 6th, in the night, before the East wind, the king made an offering to Rimmon. The 7th was a sabbath. "The prince" (or shepherd) "of many nations ate no flesh of birds or cooked fruits; did not change his clothes, or put on white robes, or offer sacrifices, or ride in his chariot, or make laws, or appoint garrisons, or use medicine 'for sickness of body.'" In the night he offered sacrifices to Merodach and Istar. On the 8th, he himself sacrificed a sheep to Nebo and Tasmit. Each night in fact had its own sacrifices. On the night of the 10th he sacrificed "in the presence of the Milky Way and the star called the Son of the Moon." On the night of the 11th, when the moon "lifts up a halo of pale light," there were sacrifices to the sun and moon. The 14th was a sabbath, like the 7th. The 16th was the feast of Merodach, on which the king did no business. The 19th was another sabbath, known as the white day, or holiday, of Gula. The 20th was "a day of light and gift-making to moon and sun—a festival." The 21st was the anniversary of the moon and sun, and a sabbath, with the same sacred prohibitions and duties as the others. The 22nd was "the Jubilee of the Lady of the Temple." The 23rd that of the sun and the air-god; and so on to the 28th which was the rest-day of Nergal, and a sabbath. The 29th, the last day of Elul, was the "rest-day of the moon, the day when the spirits of heaven and the spirits of the earth are invoked." Elul corresponded roughly with our August. *Records of the Past*, vol. vii. pp. 157-167.





CHAPTER XV.

SOLOMON. B.C. 1015-975.

THE kingdom had reached its highest glory at the death of David. It was in perfect peace, and so thoroughly organized that no one for a moment disputed its continuance in his line. There was good reason, indeed, to anticipate that its power and greatness would continue to increase, as, in some ways, they did. The fullest development of material prosperity, and the greatest splendour of the theocracy, are associated with the reign of Solomon. But underneath this glittering exterior the elements of decay were already at work, and hence the forty years during which he wore the crown form the central point of Jewish history — the period of its highest glory and also that of its commencing decline.

Solomon was about twenty years old at his father's death. He had received the name, which was equivalent to "the Man of Peace," as a pledge to his father that the sin with Bathsheba had been forgiven, in consideration of his lowly repentance.¹ Nathan, the great prophet, had

¹ Perhaps we may also see in the name Solomon, as in that of Absalom = "the Father of Peace," hints of the yearning of their father's heart for peace. Jedidiah has a marked reference to David's own name = "the Darling, the Beloved One." It literally means the Darling of Jehovah.

further called him Jedidiah,¹ "the beloved of Jehovah;" possibly in the fond belief that he would deserve so honourable a distinction; perhaps from regarding him as a gift of God to his penitent father. His early training seems to have been left to the prophet, but the influence of his mother and father, and of the court, must have contributed largely to the formation of his character. Gifted with splendid abilities, and, at least in his earlier life, enthusiastically loyal to the ancient religion, his career was to show the most striking contrast of qualities; a wisdom perhaps never equalled on the throne, and a sensuality like that of Louis XV.; a zeal for Jehovah which took outward form in the erection of the Temple, and a weakness towards his harem that introduced idolatry for the first time in Jerusalem; a statesmanship which filled the land with prosperity, and a love of splendour which laid such burdens on his people as prepared the way for the dissolution of his kingdom at his death.

The question of the succession to the throne had at first been unsettled, and it seemed to have been generally assumed that Absalom would be heir.² But at that prince's death, if not earlier, a secret promise had been made by David to Bathsheba that her son should be the next king;³ and he was actually anointed and seated on the throne, as we have seen, some time before David's death, when the plot of Adonijah threatened to set him aside. We may well imagine how earnestly David strove to secure for his son a life very different from his own; not of hardships and wars, dark crimes and passionate repentance, but from first to last pure, blameless, and peaceful; realizing the ideal of glory and righteousness,

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 5.

² 2 Sam. xiv. 13; xv. 1-6.

³ 1 Kings i. 13.

after which he had fondly but vainly striven. Whether the seventy-second Psalm be his composition or that of Solomon,¹ it doubtless expresses the aspirations with which the dying father looked forward to the reign of his son, and as such throws a strangely interesting light on the spiritual life of Israel in those days, in its highest manifestations. Written under the full influence of Divine inspiration, it points in its higher application to the glorious reign of the Messiah, in whom the kingdom of God on earth, then represented by Israel, would attain its supreme and unfading glory. But it none the less expresses the ideal of earthly monarchy in the minds of the nobler Hebrews of the age of David and of his illustrious son; an ideal rare indeed in the conceptions either of subjects or monarchs of any age.

“ Give the king Thy judgments,² O God:
Thy righteousness to the king's son;
That he may judge thy people righteously;
Thy poor with justice;
That the mountains may bear peace to the people
And the hills, through righteousness.³

May he judge the poor of the people,
Help the children of the needy,
And break in pieces the oppressor!

They will fear Thee⁴ as long as the sun endures,
As long as the moon, throughout all generations

¹ The Sept., Vulgate, Aben Ezra, and others think it Solomon's composition. Kimchi, Claus, and Stier believe it was written by David for Solomon.

² Communicate to him by Thy Spirit Thy judgment respecting cases brought before him.

³ That the blessings of peace may cover the land through the righteousness of king and subject.

⁴ The ideal king, and still more the Messiah.

He will come down like rain upon the mown grass;
 As showers that water the earth.
 In his days shall the righteous flourish,
 And abundance of peace while the moon endureth.

And he will reign from sea to sea;¹
 From the river² to the ends of the earth.

The dwellers in the wilderness³ shall bow before him;
 His enemies shall lick the dust.
 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles⁴ shall bring presents,⁵
 The kings of Sheba and Saba⁶ shall pay tribute:
 All kings shall fall down before him (in homage),
 All the heathen shall serve him.

For he delivereth the needy when he cries,
 The wretched also who have no helper:
 He spares the weak and miserable;
 He saves the souls of the poor.
 He redeems their soul from oppression and violence,
 And precious is their blood in his sight.

Under him the poor shall live, and give him of the gold of
 Sheba;
 And men shall pray for him continually,
 And bless him day by day.

There will be abundance of corn in the land, even on the
 tops of the mountains;

¹ From the one side of the ocean that surrounds the world to the other.

² The Euphrates, or perhaps the river of the ocean at the extremity of the world.

³ The disaffected. *Ewald*.

⁴ Or sea-coasts. Tarshish in Spain; "the isles" or "coasts" of the Mediterranean.

⁵ Such as inferiors always offer to a superior in the East; the mark of dependence and submission.

⁶ Sheba in Arabia Felix, Saba on the Upper Nile. See vol. i. pp. 240-1.

Its harvests will rustle ¹ like the leaves of Lebanon; ²
 Men shall spring up in the cities
 Thick as the grass of the earth.

His name shall endure for ever; ³
 It will last as long as the sun exists;
 Men shall be blessed through him;
 All nations shall gladly praise him.

Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel;
 He, who only does wondrous things;
 And blessed be His glorious name for ever,
 And let the whole earth be full of His glory.
 Amen! and Amen!

The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended."⁴

An incident recorded of Solomon in the beginning of his reign is in keeping with such an ideal of kingly glory, as springing from devout wisdom and goodness, rather than from mere splendour or power. It was a period of transition, for though David's new Tabernacle stood in Jerusalem, the people still "sacrificed in high places," "because there was as yet no house built to the name of Jehovah."⁵ The law had commanded that sacrifices should be offered only at the door of the Tabernacle,⁶ and the tribes had been required to destroy "the places on the high mountains" consecrated to idolatry,⁷ but both injunctions had long been disregarded, from necessity or

¹ The Sept. and Ewald translate this, "will top the hills."

² *Lengerke. Moll.*

³ Most translators render this line, "Let His name," etc.

⁴ The closing doxology and this last line are believed by Moll Lengerke, and most translators, to belong to another Psalm; but Kay thinks them, as I believe, correctly, in their proper place, regarding the Psalm as the composition of David. The Sept. has, as the inscription of the Psalm, "of Solomon"; the Targ' has, "by the hand of Solomon."

⁵ 1 Kings iii. 2.

⁶ Lev. xvii. 3-5.

⁷ Deut. xii. 2.

the force of ancient custom. Gideon and Manoah had both built altars on such spots; Samuel had repeatedly done so; and David had sacrificed on the threshing-floor of Ornan at the top of Mount Moriah.¹ The instinctive feeling that hill-tops are most suitable for worship, as nearer heaven, and raised above the din and disturbance of the world, yielded indeed only slowly before the heathen abuses to which they had been devoted. It was, therefore, in accordance with ancient practice that Solomon betook himself to the lofty summit, now known by the name of El Jib, the modern form of Gibeon, about six miles north of Jerusalem, which, with the whole country far and near, is seen from its top, spread out in a wide panorama. Hither, or to the twin hill immediately south, but so close to the ancient town of Gibeon as to be all but a part of it,² Solomon determined to make a solemn progress. The ancient Tabernacle, a sacred memorial of Sinai and the wilderness, stood, as a venerated relic, on its height, behind the great brazen altar, made by Bezaleel under the shadow of the Holy Mount more than 500 years before. A staff of priests had been appointed by David to offer the daily sacrifices and fulfil the other requirements of the law.³ Zadok, the high priest, was at their head, assisted by the famous musicians Heman and Jeduthun. True to his passion for magnificence, afterwards so fatally developed, the young king set forth from Jerusalem in high state, accompanied by the chiefs of thousands and of hundreds, the judges, governors, and heads of the fathers, who had

¹ Jud. vi. 25, 26; xiii. 16-23. 1 Sam. vii. 10; xvi. 5. 1 Chron. xxi. 26.

² Dr. Grove thinks the "high place" on which the Tabernacle stood was a lower eminence between El Jib and Neby Samwil.

³ 1 Chron. xvi. 40.

been summoned from all Israel to attend him.¹ His object was noble, for he wished to inaugurate his whole reign by a public religious service. But the outward form of the worship offered shows, already, a decline from the high spirituality of David to an exaggerated ritualism, which in itself had no moral significance. Less than a thousand burnt offerings were held insufficient, and hence the sacrifices must have lasted for many days: the clang of trumpets and cymbals and the exulting strains of "musical instruments of God"² resounding ever and anon, far and near, as the king, and the vast multitude of the great of the land, knelt in worship. It was at this time that the first of three recorded visions of God to Solomon took place. While asleep by night, a Divine appearance was vouchsafed to him in a dream, and he was invited to ask what should be given him. Remembering how the glory of his father had followed his "walking in truth, in righteousness and uprightness of heart before Jehovah," and feeling himself still "but a little child, knowing neither how to go out or come in," he nobly asked for "an understanding³ heart to judge God's people," and "discern justly between good and bad." Such a choice found special favour, and was answered by a promise, not only of the wisdom craved, but of unequalled riches and honour.

The beginning of Solomon's reign was not, however, entirely peaceful. He had treated his brother Adonijah and his supporters with the most generous magnanimity, after the suppression of their plot against him in the last days of his father. But the spirit of disloyalty had not been laid aside. In the East no act is more directly associated with suspicions of treason than a subject's

¹ 2 Chron. i. 2.

² 1 Chron. xvi. 42.

³ *Literally*, hearing.

marrying, or attempting to marry, a widow of the deceased king. Abner's wish to marry Rizpah led to a fatal quarrel between him and Ishbosheth, and a similar incident was now to lead to the death of Adonijah. Going to the queen mother, Bathsheba, the personage of highest influence in an Oriental court,¹ he asked her kind offices to procure him permission to make Abishag, the last concubine of David, his wife. This was enough. Benaiah, the head of the body guard, was at once sent to put him to death. It was determined, further, that his party should finally be broken up. Abiathar, the priest, was banished to his own lands at Anathoth; being spared, at least for the time, on consideration of his long fidelity to David,² and Zadok, his rival, was appointed in his place. Joab, now old, at once realized that his hour also had come. While grandly loyal to David, he had favoured Adonijah. Fleeing therefore to the tabernacle, perhaps that at Gibeon, he clung to the horns of the altar as a sanctuary where he could hope to be safe. But no mercy was shown him. By the direct command of Solomon, he was put to death there by Benaiah; though, as a poor mark of honour to a great public servant, his body was permitted to be buried on his own ground "in the wilderness."³ A third offender was

¹ 1 Kings ii. 19. 2 Kings xxiv. 12. Jer. xxix. 2.

² The ultimate degradation of Eli's line, after Abiathar's death, seems to show that, at a later period, terrible calamities were suffered by its members.

³ Better, "pasture land." Joab's descendants evidently suffered in later times. 2 Sam. iii. 29. The curse in that verse is in striking keeping with the characteristics of Oriental curses still. Furrer's *Palästina*, p. 86. Solomon's policy was that of Eastern kings in all ages, to secure his throne by putting all possible enemies to death. To kill Joab while clinging to the very horns

Shimei, who had so bitterly cursed David at the time of Absalom's rebellion ; but he was only required to stay within the limits of Jerusalem ; any attempt to go beyond them involving his immediate execution. His ultimate fate was singular. For three years he never passed the Kedron, but at the end of that time, two of his slaves having escaped to Gath, he was foolish enough to pursue them. In such an age this violation of his conditional pardon was no doubt regarded as a Divine indication that his death was required for his past guilt,¹ and accordingly he was forthwith killed.

But these were not the only troubles of Solomon's early reign. The various warlike nations which David had conquered fretted at their dependence, and hailed the great king's death, and that of Joab, his renowned captain, soon after, as the signal for revolt. Hadad, apparently a grandson of the last king of Edom, had escaped to Egypt, after many adventures, at the close of the fiercely sanguinary war in which Joab desolated the country. The reigning Pharaoh had not only received him kindly, but had given him an establishment, and had allowed him to marry the sister of his own queen, no doubt with the design of securing his support, if necessary, against the rising power of Israel. On the accession of Solomon, Hadad sought permission to return to Edom, to get back his own again, but was refused, Egypt being for the time on a friendly footing with the Jewish kingdom. The young Edomite, however, managed to escape, and flew to his native mountains, where he was forthwith acknowledged king by many of his countrymen, and was able to give Solomon of the altar was an audacious violation of the sanctity of God's house.

¹ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 292.

great trouble, though he never succeeded in gaining the entire independence of his race.¹

About the same time commotions rose in the north. Rezon, a Syrian, formerly an officer of the fallen king of Zobah, had risen as a local chief even in David's reign, and had roamed through the deserts as a freebooter.² On Solomon's accession an opportunity for bolder action seemed to offer, and, making a swoop on Damascus, he took it, and tried to make it the centre of a new power. He was not able, however, to hold it long, though his audacity continued to disturb Israel. Hamath on the Orontes³ also revolted, but Solomon soon reconquered it. Disturbances rose likewise in the west, where the petty kingdom of Gazer or Geshur, between the hills and the Philistine cities, strove to regain its independence, probably with the help of various allies.⁴ The king of Egypt, however, having after a time attacked it, apparently as a tributary state revolted from him, it was handed over to Solomon as part of the dowry of the Egyptian princess whom he then married.⁵ It may be that the turbulence of this and other remnants of the Canaanites in his opening reign, perhaps indicating an attempted general insurrection on their part, explains

¹ 1 Kings xi. 14-22. Verse 25 says, "He," Hadad, "abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria"; but the Cod. Alex. reads *Edom*, which seems necessary to make the narrative intelligible.

² 1 Kings xi. 23-25.

³ 2 Chron. viii. 3.

⁴ 1 Kings ix. 15, 16.

⁵ 1 Kings ix. 15, 16. M. Clermont Ganneau discovered in 1875 the true site of Gezer. It is now a tell called Djezer, and shows the remains of a city around. He found inscriptions in Greek and Hebrew cut into the rocks, stating the exact limits of a Sabbath day's journey round it, and fixing the site beyond question. It is three miles from Kuldu. *Revue Politique et Littéraire*, 1875, p. 939.

the severe measures taken against their race by Solomon at a later period.

Such a beginning of his rule was fitted to test the true character of the new king. His father had borne himself in his wars, not as an ordinary soldier or conqueror, but as the instrument of Jehovah, to carry out His will; and this of itself gave dignity and loftiness to his undertakings. Solomon seems for the time to have shared the same exalted conception of his position. Trained by Nathan, familiar with the lofty ideas of his father, solemnly anointed as the vicegerent of God, and at the moment swaying the sceptre of a great empire, he appears to have been filled with a Puritan enthusiasm which expressed itself, like that of David, in fervent religious lyrics. The second Psalm, while distinctly Messianic in its higher application, is believed to have been composed by him at this time as, primarily and in a limited sense, a triumphal ode over the final conquest of all his foes.¹

“ Why do the heathen band themselves together,
And the people imagine a vain thing ?
The kings of the earth have risen up,
And princes have taken counsel together
Against Jehovah and His Anointed.
‘ Let us break their chains asunder,
And cast away their bands from us.’

He that is throned in heaven laughs ;
The Lord holds them in derision.
He will speak to them in His fury,
And put them in terror with His glowing wrath.

‘ It is I, even I, who have anointed My king
Upon Zion, My holy hill.’

¹ *Ewald* vol. iii., p. 296.

Let me tell the decree: Jehovah said to me,
 'Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten thee!
 Ask Me, and I will give thee the heathen nations for an
 inheritance,
 The uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.
 Thou wilt break them in pieces with a mace of iron;
 Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'

Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings:
 Let me warn you, ye judges of the earth.
 Do homage to Jehovah with fear,
 Bow before Him with trembling."¹

The kingdom having at last been firmly "established in his hand,"² Solomon, following the usual policy of Eastern kings, strengthened his position by marriages into the royal families of the kingdoms round. With Phenicia he was already on the most friendly terms, the interests of Israel and Tyre securing their permanence. Egypt, however, might turn against him, and he therefore sought and obtained the hand of Tahpenes,³ a daughter of the reigning Pharaoh, as queen. A dynasty founded by an ambitious high-priest⁴ had been on the Egyptian throne for about 100 years; the ancient line of the descendants of Rameses having been dispossessed. But the surviving princes of that race, though exiled, never ceased to conspire for their restoration to the throne of their fathers, and at last in Solomon's day succeeded in effecting a marriage alliance with the "great king of the

¹ The remaining lines have so special a Messianic application that I omit them, as directly referring to a far greater than Solomon. A few scholars translate the words "kiss the Son" in other ways, but the great majority retain the words of our Authorized Version. Ewald translates them "Be wise," or, "receive counsel." Meier, "Do homage to Him" (the Lord).

² 1 Kings iii. 1. *Sept.*

³ 1 Kings xi. 19.

⁴ Brugch, *History*, vol. ii. p. 191.

Assyrians," which was destined to secure their object. Civil war between the exiled princes and the usurping house was perpetually breaking out, reducing the country to great wretchedness. It is not likely that Solomon would marry a princess of a dynasty evidently insecure, and hence it is more probable he took his wife from the legitimate stem of the old royal house, which was now supported by Assyria. Brugsch has, indeed, discovered that about this time an Assyrian army invaded Egypt, and made it virtually a province of their king's empire. The son of this monarch, Shushanq or Shishak,¹ an Assyrian, has, in fact, left his name as that of a reigning Pharaoh, and his successors also held their court at Bubastis, with under-kings at Tanis in the north, and Thebes in the far south.²

At last in quiet possession of a great empire, it was of supreme moment to Israel in what direction the new king would lead it. A career of conquest was alien to the genius of the people, for its wide sovereignty had been rather thrust on it as the result of defensive wars than gained by active aggression. The new position of the nation made it impossible, however, to retain the simplicity of the past. Born in the purple, and hence accustomed to royalty from his childhood; endowed with high intellectual gifts; of a fervent and imaginative nature; quick in decision, and yet emotional; fond of splendour and magnificence, yet anxious to promote the welfare of his people; reverent towards God, though without the deep spiritual experiences of his father; it remained to be seen in what way Solomon would seek to perfect what David had so nobly begun.

¹ The grandfather of the Shishak who conquered Rehoboam. *Brugsch*, vol. ii. p. 198.

² *Brugsch*, vol. ii. p. 198.

Disinclined to war, in which, besides, so far as it was not inevitable, his subjects would not have heartily supported him, Solomon turned to the less ostentatious but far more lasting victories of peace. First, however, he put his kingdom in a perfect state of defence, a work involving the labour of many years before it could be completed. Jerusalem was further strengthened, in addition to the defences erected by David. Zion was protected by a new fortress—Millo,¹—and apparently the whole city surrounded by a strong wall; the overseer of these great undertakings being no other than Jeroboam, then a youth.² The whole territory of the twelve tribes was also protected for the first time by a number of strongholds, as if in anticipation of future invasions. A strong fortress was built in Lebanon, to command the road to Damascus.³ Hazor on the north, near Lake Merom, commanding the entrance to the south from Syria; Megiddo on the plain of Esdraelon, barring an advance into the central hills; Gezer—now the large ruin Tell Djezer—on the outer edge of the hill country, almost west of Jerusalem, which it protected from the people of the Maritime Plain; the upper and lower ends of the great pass of Beth-horon, so often used by invaders from the coast; and Baalath, not far from Gezer, are especially named as thus fortified.⁴

Nor was this the only innovation on the characteristics of the past. Contrary to all former usage, he introduced into the army chariots and cavalry, till now almost unknown in Israel. Nor were they intended merely for royal display, but henceforward formed a main branch of

¹ 1 Kings ix. 15, 24. Millo = filled up. Perhaps from the filling up with earth between two outer walls.

² 1 Kings xi. 27, 28.

³ Cant. vii. 4.

⁴ 1 Kings ix. 15, 17.

the military service. Egypt especially was then famous as the market for horses, and for the manufacture of the best chariots, and this, with the marriage of Solomon with a princess of that country, helped to turn his thoughts to the Nile to procure both. "The squadrons of horses in Pharaoh's chariots at Jerusalem" ere long became famous through the land.¹ Fourteen hundred, with the horses required for them, and 12,000 trained cavalry horses, were imported, and quartered partly in the capital, partly at small garrison towns built for them up and down the country.² Stables also were established for them and for dromedaries, on an enormous scale.³ But though Solomon might think he had thus strengthened his kingdom, such an assimilation to heathen institutions called forth the first of many permanent protests against it, on the part of the prophets and the upholders of the old ideas of the theocracy.⁴

Hitherto Israel had had no foreign trade and very little of any kind, but the new relations with Phenicia early led Solomon to endeavour to create and develop commercial activity in his own dominions, for his own no less than the public benefit, as is not unfrequent with Oriental kings.⁵ It was through him that the trading spirit which

¹ Cant. i. 9.

² 1 Kings ix. 19; x. 26. The two towns, Beth Marcaboth = House of chariots; and Hazar Susah, or Susim = Horse-town, may have received their names from Solomon's time. 1 Kings v. 6; x. 26. 2 Chron. i. 14; ix. 25.

³ 1 Kings iv. 26, 27.

⁴ Isa. xxx. 1; xxxvi. 9. Ezek. xvii. 15.

⁵ The Khedives of Egypt have, as a rule, been the chief merchants of their kingdom. Gesenius translates 1 Kings x. 28: "And a company of the king's merchants brought (from Egypt) a multitude of horses." Fürst says, "A company of the king's merchants brought from Coa (some market) the horses."

has since specially distinguished it, took possession of the Hebrew nation, developing the tenacity, keenness, and worldly wisdom which have marked it since that time. Hitherto they had been mainly an agricultural people, though even in Deborah's time there are indications of luxury on the part of a few which to some extent imply trade.

Solomon's measures were alike judicious and large-minded. As the great military and commercial roads to Babylon and Assyria were in his hands, so as to give him the command of all the trade between the Euphrates and the Nile, he built towns at suitable points, as centres of commerce and depôts of goods for sale; a system long established in Egypt. They were principally in the north of the kingdom, where intercourse with other nations was brisk, and in the new territory which he had conquered from Hamath.¹ To intercept the trade of Egypt and Phenicia with Western Asia, he founded Tadmor, afterwards known as Palmyra, in a happily chosen oasis of the desert, 130 miles from the Mediterranean, on a line with Tripolis in Syria, where it continued to flourish for more than 1000 years, thanks to its position and to the numerous springs around.² In what the trade of this route consisted is left to conjecture except in one detail, which, however, shows how active it became. Egypt was then famous for a breed of horses of unusual size

¹ 1 Kings ix. 19. 2 Chron. viii. 4, 6; xvi. 4.

² Tadmor or Palmyra = city of palms, gave a much shorter route to caravans from Babylon. Following the Euphrates till on a line with Tadmor, these could strike to the west and reach it after a journey of 150 miles over the desert. When there they were only about 110 miles from Damascus. Kiepert's map, however, makes the caravan route branch off to Tadmor from a lower point on the Euphrates, involving 270 miles of desert, but making the whole journey from Babylon considerably shorter.

and strength, the counterpart of the great war horses of the middle ages, and these were in demand among the various Hittite and Syrian kings.¹ But as the key to this commerce was in Solomon's hand, so long as he was friendly with Egypt, he used it for the benefit of his own people, granting licences to them, subject to their paying him a tax on every horse or chariot sold.² But trading posts and towns would have been of little use without easy communication between them. Special roads, therefore, were constructed, leading from Jerusalem to the north and south, and along these commerce could pass for once readily, from every part of Palestine to the neighbouring lands. Josephus³ says, they were carefully paved with black basalt, but there is no intimation of this in the Bible. They were more probably only tracks cleared from loose stones, and made comparatively level.⁴

The mere overland trade, however, would not satisfy the enterprising spirit of Solomon. Roused by the example of the Phenicians, he determined to cultivate foreign commerce by sea. The Mediterranean trade was in the hands of the northern power, which, even centuries later, so keenly resisted all attempts to share its monopoly as to bring on itself the long conflict with the Romans which ultimately ruined Carthage. The first Punic

¹ They seem originally to have been brought from Asia to the Nile Valley. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. v. pp. 50-52, and the plates. See page 94.

² 1 Kings x. 28, 29. Verse 28 should be read, "As for the trade in horses, which Solomon got from Egypt, a band of king's traders used to fetch a troop (of horses) at a price." Mövers and Ewald think the sums mentioned in ver. 29, are the royalty paid to Solomon, 600 shekels=about £79, for a chariot and its gear; 150 shekels=about £18 10s. for a horse. But Keil believes these the gross cost.

³ *Ant.*, VIII. vii. 4.

⁴ *Winer*, art. *Strassen*.

War was caused by the determination of the Phenicians to keep Rome from participating in the sea trade of the Mediterranean.¹ But Solomon, since the conquest of Edom, had in Ezion-geber, at the head of the gulf of Akabah, on the north end of the Red Sea,² a port from which ships could sail to the East; indeed, it was probably that from which the Phenician ships had hitherto sailed for India. The extension of the Hebrew kingdom had, however, now transferred the whole region to the hands of Solomon, and interest and friendly policy alike inclined Phenicia to give its help to that from which, otherwise, it might be wholly excluded. Timber was floated from Tyre to Joppa, the haven in Palestine nearest the Red Sea, and thence dragged laboriously to Ezion-geber; a work of immense labour.³ Phenician carpenters and shipwrights there constructed from it great Tarshish-ships, like those sailing from Tyre to the farthest West, and crews were obtained, partly from Phenicia, partly from Dan and Zebulon, who were familiar with the sea by their residence on the coast. The cargoes to be taken out for exchange were doubtless brought by camel caravans from Tyre, which alone could supply the purple stuffs, the glass ware, and the productions of the Western world needed for barter with foreign parts. Solomon himself may have bought these, or they may have been purchased by trading companies or individual merchants, but, in

¹ Dean Stanley thinks Solomon had a mercantile navy on the Mediterranean also, but it seems to me very doubtful. *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 154.

² Kiepert places Ezion-geber, or the Giant's backbone, so called from the mountains on each side of it, at Ain el Ghudya, ten miles up what is now the dry bed of the Arabah, which, as he supposes, was then the northern end of the gulf.

³ It cannot be supposed that suitable timber grew on the spot.

any case, he would secure a full share of the profits. Israel itself had nothing to export, except perhaps the balm of Gilead, which was highly valued in antiquity for its healing and lenitive qualities.

The voyage extended to the mouths of the Indus, but every port at which the ships dropped anchor on the way would furnish a market. India, however, was the great mart. Thence, after three years' absence, the vessels returned, laden with wealth and curiosities hitherto unknown in Palestine. Long trains of camels bore the accumulated riches to Jerusalem, to the wonder of its citizens. More than 400 talents of gold, silver in great abundance, ivory, ebony, hideous apes and resplendent peacocks, with fragrant sandal-wood, aloes, cassia, cinnamon, and costly perfumes, enriched or delighted the community. From the ivory Solomon had a throne constructed, and the sandal-wood was used for the frames of harps and other instruments, and for balustrades of the bridges from the palace to the temple.¹ Ezion-geber became a populous town, multitudes of the Hebrews settling in it.² Can it be that we have a reminiscence of this period, the only one in which Israel entered largely into maritime adventure, in the Psalms which speak of

¹ 1 Kings x. 12. Dean Stanley thinks Ophir was in Sumatra or Malacca. The almug or algum tree is the Hebrew form of an Indian word of the Deccan for sandal-wood, which grows only on the Malabar coast, south of Goa. The word for ape is the usual Sanscrit word for a monkey. Thukiyim, the word for peacocks, is a Sanscrit word with a Malabar accent, and the peacock is indigenous in India. The word used for the tusks of elephants is nearly the same as in Sanscrit. Aloes, cassia, and cinnamon are connected with India and Ceylon either by name or by growth. All the products of India might well have been procurable in large quantities at the mouths of the Indus.

² 2 Kings xvi. 6.

the perils of the ocean, "the great and wide sea on which go the ships"?

"They that go down to the sea in ships,"

—down from the hills of Israel, says the 107th Psalm,

"That do business in great waters;

These see the works of Jehovah,

And His wonders in the deep.

For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,

Which lifteth up the waves thereof.

They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths:

Their soul is melted because of trouble.

They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,

And are at their wits' end.

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,

And He bringeth them out of their distresses.

He maketh the storm a calm,

So that the waves thereof are still.

Then are they glad because they be quiet;

So He bringeth them unto their desired haven."¹

Nor was this world-wide commerce the only new source of revenue and prosperity to Solomon and his people. The nations and tribes subject to him, from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates and from Syria to the Red Sea, paid a fixed tribute yearly, while their kings and chiefs, according to Eastern custom, sent rich gifts to Jerusalem annually, as expressions of homage—vessels and vases of silver and gold, rich garments and robes, costly arms and armour, spices, that is vegetable perfumes, of great price,² and the noblest horses and mules.³ Such prosperity had never been seen in Israel, and was never to return after

¹ Ps. cvii. 23-30.

² "Spices"—especially the balsam plant.

³ 1 Kings x. 25.

Solomon's death. Silver became "as stones" in Jerusalem and through the kingdom, and was "nothing accounted of,"¹ and the costly cedar-wood superseded the common sycamore hitherto used in the splendid mansions that rose on every hand.² Above all, peace blessed the land, every man dwelling safely under his vine and fig-tree,³ from Dan to Beersheba;⁴ the population meanwhile, we are told, increasing "as the sand by the sea for multitude," and "passing their days in plenty and gladness."⁵

Such results of his government must have raised the fame of Solomon to the highest, both in his own empire and in neighbouring lands, but it was not less illustrious from his immense reputation for wisdom. One incident dating from the beginning of his reign—his decision respecting the child claimed by two women—seems indeed to have specially impressed the popular fancy, and to have spread the conviction far and wide, while he was yet a youth, that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment.⁶ Other instances, also, have been handed down by tradition, such as his decision that a dispute respecting a treasure should be settled by the son of the one claimant marrying the daughter of the other.⁷ It is evident, moreover, from the ideal of kingly duty presented in the 72nd Psalm, that, at least in the opening of his reign, the desire to dispense even-handed justice, to which the "poor and needy" might appeal with confidence, and before which the strong should be curbed in every attempt at

¹ 1 Kings x. 21.

² 1 Kings x. 27.

³ The vine is often trained up the fig-trees in a vineyard, so as to spread a delightful shade underneath by their intermingling leaves.

⁴ 1 Kings iv. 25.

⁵ Weil, pp. 175-213.

⁶ 1 Kings iii. 23.

⁷ Weil's *Legends*, p. 163.

oppression or injustice, was one of his most marked characteristics. Nor were shrewd and penetrating sense and fearless uprightness in the dispensation of justice the only splendid moral and intellectual traits for which he was famous. In the widest sense he was reputed wiser than "all the children of the East,"—the Idumeans, Chaldeans, and Arab tribes of every name—whose wisdom was proverbial—or than the sages of Egypt. "God gave him wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of intellect as the sand on the sea-shore." "He was wiser than all men."¹ But intellect alone did not embrace all that a Hebrew meant by such a character; it was essential that it should rest on profoundly religious convictions, nor can we doubt that it did so in the case of Solomon. The tenor of his undisputed writings, indeed, sufficiently shows it.

To such endowments was added a restless, unwearied mental activity, which refused to confine itself to the cares of a mighty empire, but expatiated far and wide over every domain of knowledge or thought. He filled the earth, says an ancient writer, with dark parables. The countries marvelled at him for his songs and proverbs, and parables and interpretations.²

Yet the great king had his weaker side. The examples of royal splendour and despotic power seen in the courts of Egypt, Tyre, and the Euphrates, harmonizing with his own love of magnificence, led him into the gravest errors. Instead of contenting himself with a glory compatible with the ancient liberties of his people and their theocratic constitution, he steadily extended the authority of the throne till he made it supreme and in great measure despotic, and surrounded himself with a pomp which weighed ruinously on the nation. His will was

¹ 1 Kings iv. 29, 31.

² Ecclus. xlvii. 15, 17.

the law. He was the soul of the state, with whom everything must commence, and towards whose personal glory all things must contribute. The full import of the warnings of Samuel¹ respecting kings was first realized under his reign.

A numerous harem has always been a part of royal dignity in the East. Even in Egypt, in spite of the ancient law, the Pharaohs had a multitude of wives and concubines, and the kings of Palestine and of Western Asia also boasted of their seraglios. David himself had had sixteen wives, but that was insignificant compared to the domestic establishments of royalty in Phenicia and elsewhere. True to his character as the type of a great Eastern monarch, Solomon determined to outshine them all; partly, no doubt, to secure the friendship of princes by matrimonial alliances, but still more for royal magnificence. Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines testified at once to his pride, his wealth, and his sensuality. His first wife, the mother of Rehoboam, whom David, perhaps, had already won for him,² was Naamah—"the beautiful"—daughter of the King of Ammon. Others were brought from the courts of Moab and Syria, and even Edomite, Phenician, and Hittite beauties were added, presumably from royal or noble houses, contrary to the law.³

Everything else was on the same scale of grandeur, involving immense expenditure. The royal banquets were of the most costly kind. All the plate and drinking vessels were of gold, for silver was held too poor for the use of the court. Immense numbers of servants; crowds

¹ 1 Sam. viii. 11-17.

² 1 Kings xi. 1. Chosroes, king of Persia, boasted of 3000 ladies in his harem. Malcolm's *Persia*.

³ Exod. xxxiv. 16. Deut. vii. 3, 4.

of officials and courtiers; guests, such as Chimham and his brothers; embassies from subject kings and from distant nations; the thousand inmates of the harem—required a daily provision of no small magnitude. Ten fed oxen, and twenty from the pastures; 100 sheep, besides harts and roebucks, and fallow deer¹; fatted swans and other fowls; with “thirty measures”² of fine flour, and sixty measures of meal, were consumed daily—provision sufficient for the wants of about 14,000 persons.³ As there were no royal domains capable of providing such immense supplies,⁴ they had to be furnished by the general country population. The whole land, therefore, was divided into twelve districts, each under a great officer, known as a “deputy,” two being sons-in-law of Solomon. These dignitaries, among other duties, provided for the royal table and household, each taking the task for a month in the year.⁵ They seem, indeed, to have been virtually the governors of their districts, to carry out the king’s will in all things in their respective bounds. This itself was a great innovation, for it

¹ 1 Kings iv. 22, 23. Lieut. Conder found the word rendered “fallow deer”—Yahman—still used as the name of a kind of deer in Carmel. It is also the name of a large valley in a wooded district south of Carmel. *Tent Work*, p. 91.

² = (about) 660 gallons.

³ Thenius, *Die B. d. Könige*, p. 44.

⁴ From the history of David it is evident that the Crown had great herds and flocks, vineyards, oliveyards, etc., but these were quite insufficient to meet the vast wants of a court like that of Solomon, which was in effect a town in itself. Tavernier says that at the court of the Sultan in his time, 500 sheep and lambs, on an average, were consumed daily. *A. u. N. Morgenland*, p. 167. For David’s herds, etc., see p. 221. Athenæus says that the kings of Persia needed 1000 oxen a day for their courts. *Deipnos*, iv. 10.

⁵ 1 Kings iv. 7-19.

abolished the old divisions by tribes. That of Benjamin was left untouched, as too small to be divided, but districts on the Jordan and on the west borders were taken from Ephraim; while Western Manasseh was broken up into three "departments." The northern tribes were equally remodelled, and the three on the east of the Jordan were made into two divisions. Only Judah, as the tribe of Solomon, and hence the favoured of all, retained its bounds undiminished, and seems to have been exempted from the tribute, though this is not certain.¹ This ill-considered measure, among a people so conservative as the Hebrews, was a first step towards the future dissolution of the kingdom, by the heartburnings it excited.

Besides the twelve lord-lieutenants of these new "departments," there were twelve other high officials, dignified in this case with the name of princes,² though the word is commonly translated captains or chiefs. These seem to have formed the council of state, so far as there could be such a body under a despotism. They held, however, various offices. Some were scribes, having for their duty, apparently, the drawing up of all ordinances respecting the taxes and the civil life of the nation, the countersigning royal decrees, the preparation of the tax lists, and doubtless much else. Jehoshaphat, who had filled the office of recorder or annalist at the court of David,³ retained his post, which was in effect that of the

¹ Reuss, *Histoire des Israelites*, p. 422.

² 1 Kings iv. 2. Dean Stanley speaks of this title "sarim," having till this time been "almost confined to Joab" (*Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 160); but it frequently occurs even for inferior officers of the army. It is generally, however, translated "captain" or "captains;" e.g. 1 Sam. xxii. 7. 2 Sam. iv. 2; xviii. 1. 1 Kings i. 25; ii 5; etc., etc. etc.

³ 2 Sam. viii. 16.

chancellor or vizier of the kingdom. The Hebrew word for it¹ means "the mentioner," who, as "the king's mouth," brought all weighty matters before him—such as the complaints, petitions, and wishes of subjects or foreigners. He also drew up papers for the king's guidance, and prepared drafts of the royal will for the scribes. All treaties came under his oversight, and he had the care of the national archives and records, to which, as royal historiographer, like the same state officers in Assyria and Egypt, he added the current annals of the kingdom.² Benaiah, formerly the captain of the 600 Gibborim under David, held the high post of commander-in-chief of the army, after the killing of Joab. Zadok and Abiathar were the royal priests. One son of Nathan the prophet was placed over the twelve officers for supplying the royal table, and another filled the specially confidential post of "king's friend." The commander of the body guard—doubtless the Crethi and Plethi—was also one of the great officers;³ and Adoniram, an old servant of David, who had been over the forced labour demanded by his master from the Canaanites, and perhaps also over the military levy,⁴ retained this office under Solomon.⁵ It is curious to find that the son of Nathan is called a priest, though not of the family of Aaron; but the title is no longer given, as it had been, under David, to members of the royal family.⁶ One of the most important offices was that of the steward of the palace, a dignitary created in imitation of the usage of the Egyptian and Assyrian courts. It was a position of great influence, for the steward had the right of introducing persons or matters to the king, and, indeed, in many cases represented

¹ Mazkir.

² *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 365.

³ 1 Kings iv. 6. *Sept.*

⁴ 2 Sam. xx. 24. 1 Kings iv. 6.

⁵ 1 Kings iv. 2-6.

⁶ 2 Sam. viii. 18; xx. 26. *Heb.*

him. Before such a dignitary even the recorder or remembrancer had gradually to give way; the steward in the end taking the foremost place in the realm. Under David, Joab had been the chief subject during the troubled years of war. Under Solomon, the high priest had this honour,¹ at least in earlier years. But as the kingdom declined under later reigns, the steward became the chief minister, combining with his proper office that of keeper of the royal treasury and armoury,² and marked by an official robe and girdle; the gigantic key of the house of David resting on his shoulder, like a sword of state, when he went abroad.³ In Solomon's reign this evil had not yet come, though in that of Hezekiah we shall see even Isaiah denouncing the pride, luxury, and tyranny of the alien Shebna, who held this high dignity.⁴

As yet, however, only Israelites held place round the king. Foreigners were first admitted to high office at a much later time. Eunuchs to preside over the harem were unknown till introduced under the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, but the kings of Judah gradually copied the evil example, and these degraded beings ultimately became prominent and influential in general state affairs.

At first Solomon contented himself with appearing in public, like David, on a mule, but before long this was too humble. Sixty of the valiant Gibborim guarded his litter as he made his royal progresses,⁵ and his chariots and runners were famous. The person of highest authority in the court—above that of any of the ministers—was the king's mother—thanks to polygamy, which prevented the due influence of a queen. So great was her power, as we shall see, that Athaliah, contrary to

¹ 2 Sam. viii. 16, xx. 23. 1 Chron. xxvii. 34. 1 Kings iv. 2.

² 1 Kings xiv. 27; Isa. xxii. 15.

³ Isa. xxii. 21, 22.

⁴ Isa. xxii. 15, 16, ff.

⁵ Cant. iii. 7, 8.

all precedent in Israel, was able to seize on the throne itself.¹ The sceptre had been the most notable sign of royalty in former times, but Saul had worn a royal turban and David had assumed the crown of the king of Ammon.² Solomon does not seem to have worn one till after his Egyptian marriage, but from that time it became the distinguishing sign of royalty. According to Ewald, a high official, as in all heathen courts, had it in charge, from the days of Saul, to prepare the king's sleeping chamber, and to bear to him at home and abroad a basin for his toilet.³

The magnificence of the court in all its details was in keeping with its numerous grades of officials. For the first years of his reign, till the temple was built, Solomon made his home in the modest house which David had built for himself, but it did not satisfy his love of display. A site was chosen, apparently on a southern spur of the temple hill, known as Ophel.⁴ It consisted rather of a series of buildings than of a single great structure; their size and splendour being indicated by the fact that thirteen years—a longer time than was required by the temple—were spent in their erection.⁵ They were, in fact, a monument of his glory not less splendid than that structure itself. As with the sacred House, Syrian architects, artists, and workmen were employed, for Israel could not have built it unaided by their more highly cultivated neighbours. The chief building, 150 feet long,

¹ 2 Kings xi.

² 1 Chron. xx. 2. The word for Saul's "crown"—Nāzer—is that used for the high priest's diadem, which was a kind of turban: that used for the crown of Ammon is the usual word for a royal crown—Atarah.

³ *Geschichte*, vol. iii. pp. 130, 372.

⁴ —Hill.

⁵ 1 Kings vii. 1; ix. 10.

75 broad, and 45 high, was in three storeys, with a grand porch of fifteen lofty pillars in three rows, of the costliest and tallest cedars—a feature which gained it the name of the House of the Forest of Lebanon.¹ Close to this, so as sometimes to be spoken of as itself the House of the Forest,² rose the tower of the House of David, famous for the shields which hung on its walls, in accordance with the custom in antiquity to adorn the walls of fortresses in this way. The shields hung on those of the strong towers of Tyre are celebrated by Ezekiel.³ Arms were hung round the walls of the second temple at Jerusalem.⁴ At Rome the temple of Bellona was adorned with shields, and at Athens the round marks of shields, which once hung on the walls of the Parthenon,⁵ are still to be traced. The Tower of David shone with a glory beyond that of any other fortress, from the number and variety of these glittering ornaments. A thousand golden bucklers, all shields of mighty men hung round it.⁶ Five hundred of these had been made by Solomon for his body guard,⁷ but there were five hundred besides, taken, long before, by David, from the guard of king Hadadezer of Zobah, in the Syrian wars.⁸ Hebrew poets likened the tower, as it glittered with them, to the neck of a bride decked out in Eastern style with rows of golden coins.⁹ The residences of the king and of the harem were separate structures, and distinct from them was the great Judgment Hall, built, like the rest, of squared stone and lined with cedar wood.¹⁰ Here stood the throne, so famous as a wonder

¹ 1 Kings vii. 2.

² Ezek. xxvii. 10, 11.

³ Stanley's *Jewish Ch.*, vol. ii. p. 163.

⁷ 1 Kings x. 16, 17.

⁹ Cant. iv. 4.

² Isa. xxii. 8.

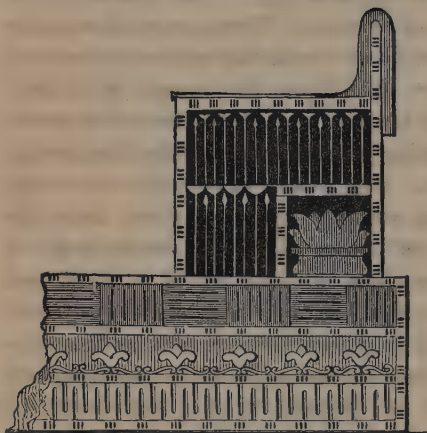
⁴ Jos., *Ant.*, XV. xi. 3.

⁶ Cant. iv. 4.

⁸ 2 Sam. viii. 7.

¹⁰ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 341.

of art and magnificence—made of ivory, inlaid with pure gold. It stood at the top of six steps, on which were twelve lions—doubtless because the lion was the standard of Judah.¹ A lion stood also on each arm of the throne itself. The back ended above in a half-circle.² The seat itself was a golden bull, its head turned over its shoulder; probably the ox or bull of Ephraim.³ This was “the throne of the House of David”



AN EGYPTIAN THRONE.

—“the seat of judgment.” Standing in a “porch,” it preserved the traditional custom of sitting for judgment at the gate,⁴ as David had been wont to do of old, and as had been done before him from the remotest past.

Other buildings, resting like those of the palace itself

on substructions of immense squared stones, were required for the harem, for the members and attendants of the court, and for the entertainment of distinguished visitors. A special mansion for Solomon's Egyptian queen was also erected, of squared stone throughout, resting on courses of stones of 12 and 15 feet in length, and entered by a porch copied in

¹ Gen. xlix. 9. Isa. xxix. 1. Ezek. ix. 2.

² Ewald, vol. iii. p. 341.

³ 1 Kings vii. 8.

⁴ 2 Sam. xv. 2.

miniature from that of the Judgment Hall; the pride and glory of the whole mass of structures. She had lived at first in some mansion in the "City of David," the king scrupling to receive a heathen, though she was his queen, into his father's palace, which had once been hallowed by the presence of the Ark.¹

But these palaces, however splendid, could not be regarded as complete, especially in the East, without great gardens, displaying every triumph of horticultural art. The kings of the Ten Tribes could easily create such delights in the fertile neighbourhood of Samaria and Jezreel, but Solomon alone attempted to make a royal "paradise" amidst the bare hills of Judea. Streams of clear water had been brought from a distance in covered aqueducts, and gathered in great reservoirs for the supply of the temple and of the city, besides feeding conduits which afforded the necessary means of irrigation for his gardens and pleasure grounds. One of these seems to have been formed immediately under the walls of Jerusalem, at the junction of the valleys of Hinnom and of the Kedron. A second, on a larger scale, was probably at the square-topped hill known as El Fureidis—the Paradise—seven miles south of the capital, whence it is still reached by the Wady Urtâs,² which winds towards it with a display of verdure unusual in that barren region. There, it would seem, the great Sultan "planted vineyards, made gardens and parks, or paradises, planting trees in them of all kinds of fruits,"—the whole kept fresh under the blazing Eastern sky by streams from "pools of water," made for the purpose, "to water therewith the wood that

¹ 2 Chron. viii. 11.

² The site of the gardens is said by Josephus to have been at Etham, the present Urtâs, south of Bethlehem, where there is a spring called Ain Atân. Conder's *Handbook*, p. 411.

bringeth forth trees.”¹ Here his court could wander among “beds of spices” and “gather lilies,” and sit under the shadow of branching trees “with great delight.” “Pomegranates, with precious fruits, henna, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon; with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, and all the chief spices,” growing freely or forced by art, delighted the senses; “garden fountains, and living waters in rills and streams”² adding to the enchantment.

To these thoroughly Oriental splendours, Josephus tells us, Solomon—conspicuous by his always wearing white robes—was wont to ride out in a magnificent chariot drawn by horses of matchless speed and beauty, and attended by an escort of mounted archers, all young men of special stature and noble features, in robes of Syrian purple, over which hung glittering arms;³ their long black hair, shining with gold dust sprinkled on it each day, flowing free in the wind as they swept on.

But the heat of Judea in summer was too overpowering to be endured when it might be avoided by temporary removal to the cool heights of Lebanon. On these, therefore, a summer palace was built.⁴ The royal vineyard at Baal-hermon was especially noted for its richness. From the airy slopes of the mountains the black tents of the Arabs could be seen far below, contrasting with the hangings of the pavilions in which for the time

¹ Eccles. ii. 4-6. An inscription, assigned by Prof. Sayce to the age of Solomon, has just been discovered in the passage leading from the Pool of Siloam to the Virgin's Fountain. Dr. Neubauer and the Rev. Isaac Taylor, however, think it dates from the reign of Ahaz. The translation by Prof. Sayce is given on page 403.

² Cant. vi. 2; iv. 13-15.

³ *Ant.*, VIII. vii. 3.

⁴ Cant. iv. 8; viii. 11.

the king and his court chose to live.¹ The peaks of Amana, Shenir, and Hermon, then known as the haunt of lions and leopards, were the scenes of holiday rambles.² The far-off approach of Solomon to these mountain retreats, as announced by watchmen on the heights, is perhaps referred to in Canticles, in the question, "Who is this that cometh up from the pasture land, clouds of



A VIEW IN LEBANON.

incense rising before him?" as is still done before illustrious princes.³ "Who is this that cometh veiled in the fragrance of myrrh and frankincense, and all the sweet-

¹ Cant. i. 5. "Curtains"—hangings at the entrance of a tent.

² Cant. iv. 8.

³ It was burnt before the Prince of Wales on his entering Beirût. Cant. iii. 6-10.

smelling roots of the merchant? Behold his litter, it is Solomon's. Sixty Gibborim are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all bear swords, and are famous in war; every man has his sword on his thigh to guard the king by night. King Solomon has made himself a state palanquin of the wood of Lebanon. Its pillars he made of silver, its seat of gold, its cushions of Syrian purple, its sides inlaid with ebony, and it was carpeted, as a token of love, by the daughters of Jerusalem."¹ In such magnificence did he move from place to place.

Of his personal appearance and immediate characteristics we have still a few details. He appeared in public with his crown, which the queen mother placed on his head on the day of his marriage.² Allusion seems to be made in the 45th Psalm³ to this grand ceremony, though to which of his queens it refers is not known. The robes of the king are described as so laden with the richest perfumes of India and Arabia, that they seem made of myrrh and aloes and cassia. The joyous music of stringed instruments floats round him out of ivory palaces. A crowd of beautiful women—his wives and concubines—stand by him; most of them the daughters of kings. The queen, their head, sits on his right hand, in robes glittering with the gold of Ophir. Tyre, the richest of nations, honours the occasion with sumptuous gifts. As he leads the new king's daughter he has espoused to the inner palace or harem, she is a blaze of grandeur. She is now to forget her own people and her father's house, and find her glory in her children, whom the king will make princes in all the earth.⁴ Nor will it

¹ Cant. iii. 6-10; translation from various authorities.

² Cant. iii. 11.

³ The higher Messianic reference of the Psalm is not, of course, affected by this.

⁴ Ps. xlv. 10, 16.

be difficult, if splendour and lavish refinements of luxury can do so, for round her are silver and gold, the magnificent gifts of kings and the wealth of provinces, while men singers and women singers, and all the delights of the sons of men, have been gathered together to please her.¹

¹ Eccles. ii. 8. The meaning of the last phrase of the verse is very doubtful.

TRANSLATION OF THE INSCRIPTION DISCOVERED AT THE POOL OF
SILOAM.

“Behold the excavation! Now this is the further side (*or* the history) of the tunnel. While the excavators were lifting up the pick, each towards his neighbour, and while there were yet three cubits to the mouth (of the tunnel) the excavators were hewing. Each came to his neighbour at a measure’s length (?) . . . in the rock on high; and they worked eagerly at (the) castle they had excavated (?); the excavators worked eagerly each to meet the other, pick to pick. And the waters flowed from their outlet to the Pool for a distance of 1000 cubits, from the lower part (?) of the tunnel (which) they excavated at the head of the excavation here.”—*Prof. Sayce, in Pals. Fund Reports, 1881, p. 149.*

The inscription seems designed to commemorate the successful excavation of the tunnel or conduit, by parties working from both ends—a great feat, doubtless, in those days.





CHAPTER XVI.

THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON.

THE popular feeling against the erection of a temple to Jehovah, like those raised by other nations to their idols—so strong in the earlier reign of David, when Nathan became its mouthpiece—had gradually died away when Solomon ascended the throne. It was doubtless felt that such a religious centre would consolidate and unite the nation, while putting an end to the unsettled state of things, which, besides countless high places, saw one sanctuary at Gibeon, and another at Jerusalem, both on a very humble scale, unworthy of a people now so prosperous and great.

Secure from without, and rich alike from the inherited accumulations of his father and his own policy, Solomon, therefore, resolved at the beginning of his reign to carry out the design which David had so earnestly cherished, but had been forced to lay aside. The site had already been determined by the vision of the angel to David on Mount Moriah, at the time of the great plague. He had bought the open-air threshing-floor of Araunah, the spot on which the awful apparition had stood. It lay, not on the very summit of the hill, but some yards below it, the rough top being pierced by a cave which served for storing the grain.¹ On this highest peak, as will be seen, the

¹ Warren's *Underground Jerusalem*, p. 59.

Ark was hereafter to rest in the Holy of Holies. Materials had been provided in immense abundance by David,¹ but they were not sufficient. Stone was got from huge quarries in the twin hills on which Jerusalem and the temple stood.² Immense blocks were cut, hewn into shape, and bevelled, ready for use, before being brought to the spot where they were required. Vast excavations are still to be seen on the north side of the city, 700 feet long, and in some places, as broad, showing a labyrinth of chambers, in which the pillars supporting the roof are still standing.³ The great stones for the foundations,

¹ The gold left by David to Solomon for the temple, as stated in 1 Chron. xxii. 14; xxix. 4, was equal to 13,500,052 pounds troy; the silver, on the same authority, was equal to 127,125,000 pounds troy. At the present value of the two metals, this would be equivalent to £1,029,377,496 sterling. This inconceivable sum, however, is obtained by estimating the value of the talent by the Jewish standard. But the Book of Chronicles, in which the figures are given, was written after the Babylonish captivity, and it has been thought probable that hence the Chaldean talent is implied. This would reduce the amount to £600,000,000. But if the Syrian talent was in the mind of the sacred writer, the value would only be £120,000,000. In 1 Kings x. 14 the gold received by Solomon in one year, besides that of inland trade, was 666 talents = £3,996,000. Of this the Ophir fleet brought from one voyage 450 talents = £2,700,000; from a second voyage it brought 420 talents = £2,520,000. The gift of the queen of Sheba was 120 talents = £720,000, and Solomon obtained the same amount from Hiram. These comparatively small amounts make it difficult to imagine whence David, who had not such advantages as his son, could have obtained the amazing wealth which ordinary computations ascribe to him. The solutions given above are those of Dr. Kitto, who thinks, besides, that the figures may in some measure have suffered from errors of copyists, in the course of so many centuries. *Solomon and the Kings*, pp. 63, ff.

² Graetz, vol. i. p. 310.

³ De Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, p. 2. Sepp, *Jerusalem*,

and walls, were got from these quarries, in which one huge monolith that had split as it was being removed, still lies as it was left in Solomon's day. Arrangements were also made with Hiram of Tyre for whatever else was needed. With a rare magnanimity he agreed to supply Solomon with as much cedar and cypress timber as he might need,¹ asking only, in return, that the barley, wheat, oil and wine required by the army of labourers employed in cutting it down and transporting it to Jerusalem, should be supplied to them.² The timber itself was a royal gift.³ Carried to the sea-shore near Lebanon, it was floated in rafts to Joppa, and then dragged toilsomely up to the capital. But the site itself needed to be prepared. The hill did not offer a level space sufficient for the building intended, and had to be cut away at one part and built up to the needed elevation at another. This involved the raising across the south of the hill a wall of solid masonry, almost equal in height to the tallest of our church spires, and longer than York Minster.⁴ On the eastern side, also, the wall was of immense height, though the statement of Josephus that it was 450 feet high is evidently a mistake, since the bottom of the Kedron

vol. i. p. 287. Tristram's *Land of Israel*, p. 190. Norman Macleod says that "Jerusalem is reared over one vast cavern"—the quarries.

¹ The Book of Chronicles adds "almug" (sandalwood) "out of Lebanon." But sandalwood grows only in India. (2 Chron. ii. 8.)

² 2 Chron. ii. 15. 1 Kings v. 9.

³ The Egyptians and Assyrians employed cedar for their temples and palaces. It was exported from Lebanon to the Nile before the time of Abraham. Chabas, *Études sur l'Antiquité*, p. 127. The kings of Nineveh imposed a tribute of cedar and cypress-wood on the people of Lebanon. *Western Asiatic Inscriptions*, vol. i. p. 45. Smith's *History of Assur-banipal*, pp. 513, 335. Menant, *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, pp. 196, 198, 213, 246, etc.

⁴ *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 9.

valley was only 270 feet below.¹ Inside the open spaces thus created, long rows of arches and chambers helped to bring the surface to a level. Before beginning the temple itself, moreover, provision had to be made for the water supply, so essential for the innumerable sacrifices to be offered. There is no spring in the hill, so that vast cisterns had to be hewn out, and a series of these were therefore excavated, capable of holding over 10,000,000 gallons. All these were supplied with water brought by an aqueduct from Solomon's pools near Bethlehem, a system of channels connecting the whole. The final overflow, after they were filled, passed off by a conduit into the Kedron. One cistern alone, that known as the Great Sea, would contain nearly 3,000,000 gallons.²

As soon as the stones and the timber were ready, the building began on the levelled space, now represented by the wide area which encloses the Mosque of Omar. Three years were consumed in the various preparatory labours, which were all completed at a distance from the actual site, so that no sounds of the mason or carpenter might be heard on the sacred hill.

No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung;
Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung.

The walls were then raised under the direction of Phenician builders, and in the Phenician style. They were of

¹ Conder's *Handbook*, p. 368. "Part of the old wall still remains towering up 80 feet above the present ground line. It was our fortune to discover that the superb old wall existed as far and farther below ground than it did above; and that it was 143 feet from the rock to the top of the temple courts." Warren's *Underground Jerusalem*, p. 417.

² Conder's *Handbook*, p. 363. Its roof is supported by pillars of rock. The exact age of all these cisterns is not known; some of them may date only from the building of Herod's temple.

squared stones, with bevelled edges, and in many cases of gigantic size,¹ each silently placed at once in its proper position. The interior was lined with cedar, on which were carved figures of palm-trees, cups of flowers, and cherubim, and these were overlaid with gold. The superintendent of this finer work was one Hiram, the son of a woman of Dan² and of a man of Tyre, who was "skilful to work in gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, or timber, and no less so in purple, blue, fine linen, and crimson," besides being noted as able to execute "any kind of graving, and to devise all kinds of curious work."³ So great, indeed, was his fame, that he is called "the father" both of Solomon and of Hiram.⁴

The size of the temple, compared to that of our cathedrals or even churches, was insignificant; for, like all sacred edifices of the nations of antiquity, it was designed not for the assembling of the people—the fore courts were for that—but as the especial dwelling-place or "House" of God. Hence it was only about 90 feet long, 30 feet broad, and 45 feet high, and was divided into a Holy of Holies of 30 feet long, and a Holy Place of 60,⁵

¹ The stones near the rock vary from 6 feet in thickness to 3 feet 3 inches. One at the S.W. corner is 39 feet long. Most, however, are from 23 feet long to only about a yard. It is the chief corner-stone that is largest. No mortar has been used; the stones fitting exactly on each other. *Underground Jerusalem*, pp. 420-3.

² Graetz says of Naphtali. He had lived in the territory of that tribe. The Masoretic form of the name is Hiram.

³ 2 Chron. ii. 14. ⁴ 2 Chron. ii. 13; iv. 16. In these verses the title Abi, "my father," is added to Hiram's name: a mark of respect and esteem still common in the East.

⁵ The size of the temple and its divisions are either the same or in a fixed proportion to those of the Tabernacle; so strong was the hold of that venerable relic of the past on the popular mind.

the two separated by a thin wall pierced by a connecting door. The Holy of Holies stood higher than the rest of the building. At the entrance of the Holy Place was an open pillared court, or porch, as broad as the building, and 15 feet deep, but rising to the enormous height of 180 feet,¹ if the present reading of the text be correct. The Septuagint, however, makes it only 30 feet high, and some of the best critics think 45 must have been the original number given,² though Ewald fancies the figures in our version correct.³ In this case, however, it would have dwarfed the whole structure behind. Whatever its height, it rested on two great pillars of brass, which were reckoned a marvel of workmanship. Their shafts were 27 feet high and 18 feet in circumference, in the shape of the stalk of a lily, broadening above into a capital of lily leaves, round which hung wreaths of 100 bronze pomegranates, which swayed in the wind. The pillar on the left was called Boaz, that on the right Jachin, but the meaning of these names is unknown.⁴ They, and all the brass ornaments and vessels, were cast in the Jordan valley "between Succoth and Zarthan," that is, near the mouth of the Jabbok.⁵ Along the two

¹ 2 Chron. iii. 4.

² *Thenius. Keil. Bertheau.*

³ *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 321.

⁴ Gesenius thinks they were called after the givers or constructors; Ewald that they were called after sons of Solomon. Thenius supposes that the two words were to be read together, as an ascription of the glory of the whole temple—of which they seemed the supports—to Jehovah. He would read them, "He (Jehovah) founded or established it (jachin) with might"; taking Boaz as the two words Ba Öz. St. Ephrem had already suggested this solution. The words, Thenius thinks, were engraved on the two pillars, so as to be read by all. *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 105.

⁵ 1 Kings vii. 45, 46. Conder's *Handbook*, p. 425.

sides and the back of the temple rose buildings half the height of the main structure, in three storeys, each $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, divided into chambers for the priests and Levites, and for store-rooms for temple necessities, but they were not allowed to touch the outer walls of the Holy of Holies. Windows, with close lattice work, opened on the sides for light, but there were none at the back. The entrance to the temple was at the west, for it was desirable that Israel should not, like other nations, honour the sun as divine. Hence comparatively little light entered the building, its interior remaining dimly obscure; for temples, in antiquity, were always left in partial gloom, and their holy of holies kept absolutely dark. The roof was of cedar, and, in part, apparently flat, for gilded chambers were built on it.¹ The half-doors of the Holy of Holies were of olive, covered with golden cherubim, palms, and the open cups of flowers.² The two half doors of the Holy Place, and its floor, were of cypress, similarly adorned and plated with gold: the doors moving on golden hinges. In the Holy of Holies there were only the cherubim and the Ark, which rested, as already noticed, on a jutting pinnacle of the hill, known to the ancient Jews as the "Stone of foundation." It was the highest point of the rock, and is still almost worshipped by its present Mahomedan guardians, under the name of the Sakhrāh. A vault had been excavated beneath this, perhaps the old granary of Araunah, but serving now to ensure the purity of the spot on which the Ark stood.³ The doors into the Holy of Holies were secured by golden chains passing across and fastened to the walls.⁴ The inner cedar walls of the whole building were adorned throughout with cherubim, palms, and carved work of lilies, in

¹ 2 Chron. iii. 9.

² 1 Kings vi. 32.

³ Conder's *Handbook*, p. 365.

⁴ 1 Kings vi. 21.

stalk and leaf and flower; for the lily and lotus were then the equivalent of our rose, from China to Lesser Asia; the rose being as yet unknown.¹ The walls were also enriched with precious stones.² Along one side of the outer area ran a porch with chambers over it for the priests, the covered walk beneath being destined hereafter to be the favourite place with the prophets for addressing the people and instructing their disciples.³ On the wall of the porch hung, apparently, the shields and spears of David's army; perhaps also the sword and skull of Goliath, originally kept in the Tabernacle.⁴ Hereafter this porch was continued all round, by the later kings, but even in the temple of Herod the name of the original portico, from which the rest had sprung, was retained, and clung to that erected on its ruins; the whole colonnade then built being known as Solomon's porch.⁵

A spacious quadrangle, on all sides enclosed by a wall, formed the boundary of the sacred grounds. Part of this, on a higher level than the rest and nearest the temple, was enclosed by a low wall of squared stones, with a coping of cedar beams, and formed the court of the priests. A higher wall ran all round the area, which, however, if we can trust the statement of Josephus,⁶ was only half as large as that enclosing the temple of Herod; or about 550 feet east and west, and 500 north and south.⁷ Its surface was lower than the temple, so

¹ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 327. 1 Kings vi. 29.

² 2 Chron. iii. 6.

³ 2 Kings xxiii. 11. 1 Chron. ix. 26, 33. Jer. xxvi. 2; xxxv. 4; xxxvi. 10, 20. ⁴ 1 Sam. xvii. 54; xxi. 9. 2 Chron. xxiii. 9. As the head and hands of Nicanor were hung up in the Second Temple. 2 Macc. xv. 35.

⁵ John x. 23. - Acts iii. 11; v. 12.

⁶ *Bell. Jud.*, I. xxi. 1.

⁷ *Conder's Handbook*, p. 367.

that the holy building rose above it on all sides. Trees adorned the open space—the dark cedar, the palm, and the olive, especially.¹ This was in keeping with the universal custom of having a sacred grove connected with every temple, and with the old patriarchal worship under the shade of terebinths or tamarisks; a usage perpetuated in the shady trees—the cypresses and olives, the grass, and the yellow and red flowers—which still delight the eye, in the same enclosure, under its Mahomedan masters.² “I am like an olive tree in the house of God:” “those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall put forth their leaves in the courts of our God,” was imagery natural to the Hebrew amidst the verdure of the temple grounds. But these trees were destined hereafter to be debased to far other than their intended uses, for under them the licentious rites of Phenician idols were one day to be celebrated.

Immediately before the temple, in the forecourt connected with the porch, stood the altar, above the lower level of the rest of the temple grounds. It was a square chest of wood, covered outside with plates of brass, with raised corners or horns; the inside filled with stones and earth; a brass grating covering the top; large rough stones underneath forming its support.³ It was 30 feet long, the same in breadth, and 15 feet high,⁴ and took the place of the ancient brazen altar, then at Gibeon. But, huge as it was, it was destined to be replaced in the second temple by one more than twice as large.

The arrangements within the temple itself were nearly the same as in the Tabernacle. The ancient Ark was preserved, but a fresh cover was made for it, with two new cherubim. They were of olive wood, plated with

¹ Ps. lli. 8; xcii. 12, 13.

² Furrer's *Palästina*, p. 35.

³ *Middoth* iii. 4.

⁴ 2 Chron. iv. 1.

the finest gold, 15 feet high, with outspread wings, each $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet in expanse;¹ those of the one cherub touching those of the other, as they overarched the mercy seat. They could not, however, be seen from the Holy Place; only the long staves on which the Ark was to be borne were visible from it. A thick curtain of blue, purple, and crimson, on a white ground of the finest linen, covered with figures of cherubim, hung outside the doors of the Holy of Holies, to screen it from all eyes. In the Holy Place stood a table covered with plates of gold, but instead of the single seven-branched candlestick of the Tabernacle, ten separate lamps of gold were placed, five on the north and five on the south side; the snuffers, tongs and snuff dishes being also of pure gold.² In the forecourt, which was for the use of the priests alone, beside the great brazen altar, stood, on the south-east, a vast brazen laver, for the numerous ablutions required by those on duty. Standing $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, and measuring 15 feet from side to side, it well deserved the name of the brazen sea. Its edge was turned down like that of a ewer, and adorned by overhanging lilies; two rows of floral ornament rising round it, and twelve brazen oxen, three to each quarter of the heavens, supporting it beneath.³ Ten brazen lavers, resting on as many wheeled stands⁴ served to bear water to any part where the washing of the sacrifices and cleansing the temple might require it. They and the laver were trophies of the victories of David, for they were made of copper taken during his Syrian wars.⁵ The palace of Solomon standing behind the temple was connected with it by special stairs and galleries, on which the costliest material

¹ 1 Kings vi. 23-28.

² 2 Chron. iv. 7.

³ 2 Chron. iv. 2-7.

⁴ 1 Kings vii. 27-39.

⁵ 1 Chron. xviii. 8.

was lavished. By this private approach the king had access to gilded chambers built for himself alone.¹

Compared with the religious buildings of Assyria, Babylon, or Egypt, a structure like the temple, apart from its vast substructions, was hardly worthy of notice either for size or splendour. The great temple of Amon, at Thebes, for example, ultimately extended to a length of 1,170 feet, while the ruins of its associated edifices still cover a plateau nearly four miles in circumference.² That of Belus, at Babylon, was of no less amazing size and grandeur.³ Nor is the contrast between the simplicity of the Israelite temple and that of those on the Nile, less striking. Its exterior seems to have been entirely plain, and though there was a pillared porch, it shrank into insignificance before the long avenues of mighty columns of Egyptian sanctuaries, the alleys of sphinxes, the obelisks, and the vast pylons, all, in common with the temples themselves, covered with sculpture and ornament. But the lavish employment of gold

¹ Some have thought, but apparently without reason, that the remains of a bridge still found at the south western-corner of the temple area, marks this "approach." In any case, however, the bridge must have been a magnificent structure. One of the stones in the fragment of it still left measures 24 feet in length, and another 20. When complete, it would seem to have been composed of five arches, each 41 feet in span, and its elevation above the then existing ravine could not have been less than 100 feet. It is mentioned in Pompey's time, twenty years before Herod ascended the throne. If this was what the Queen of Sheba saw, she may well have admired it.

The chambers of the priests were their dwelling places while they were on duty, and as such had kitchens, etc. 1 Kings vi. 8. 2 Chron. xxxi. 11. Jer. xxxvi. 10. Ezek. xl. 45; xlii. 1; xlv. 20 24; *Ant.*, VIII. iii. 2.

² Kugler, *Gesch. der Baukunst*, 1855, pp. 27-39.

³ See vol. i. p. 275.

for the decoration of the interior of Solomon's building exceeds anything told us of other ancient temples. Yet the reverence thus shown for their sanctuary by the Hebrews displayed itself rather by the richness of the material so freely expended on it, than in form and proportion; for when intrinsic value is the predominant feature, art has only limited scope. Israel, moreover, was still wholly dependent on foreign artistic skill, and at the same time was rigidly excluded from whatever even remotely pointed to the heathen ideas which were then the basis of all art. Only innocent details could be sanctioned. The bas-reliefs of palms and flowers, the forms of lions and oxen, and the mystical shapes of the winged cherubim were the widest range of invention or fancy permitted. Even in these, however, Phenician art, borrowed from Assyria, may be traced, for the ruins of Nineveh still disclose allied conceptions and style of ornament. It was of course impossible that any such structure could be erected without bearing in some measure the stamp of the age.

Yet in spite of these trifling analogies, there was a fundamental contrast between the temple of Solomon and all other sacred buildings of antiquity, in the mysterious vacancy of the Holy of Holies. No idol, statue, or sacred animal profaned it. The pure spirituality of Jehovah was sublimely indicated by the absence of any symbol of His presence. He might be conceived as dwelling between the cherubim, but He was at the same time the God whom the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain,¹ and the thought of His abode in a house made with hands was felt to be only an accommodation to the narrowness of human ideas. Heaven was still His dwelling place,² from which He heard the

¹ 1 Kings viii. 27.

² 1 Kings viii. 39.

prayers of His people, though, in condescension to the weakness of their nature, they were permitted to pray towards the holy building erected to His name.¹

The loftiness and purity of the true religion thus shone out, from the new temple, into the thick darkness of heathenism around. The circumstances of its dedication alone vindicated the faith of which it was the supreme symbol. The whole building, so far as Solomon designed to carry it at the time, was completed in the eighth month of the eleventh year of his reign, so that the erection had taken just eight and a half years.² That the months and years of its progress should be thus recorded shows the importance attached to the undertaking; for such minuteness does not occur in reference to any previous event except the Exodus. Nearly a whole year, however, passed before its public consecration, the great yearly harvest feast of Tabernacles, which attracted the nation from all parts, and was thus best suited for the imposing ceremony, having been a month past when the temple was finished. There was hence a delay till the seventh month of the next year. Then, however, a week's festivity was allotted to the dedication, in addition to the usual seven days of the harvest feast.

Vast preparations were made for an occasion so august. All the hereditary and elected heads of tribes, clans, or sub-divisions of Israel were summoned to attend at Jerusalem, with the priesthood from all parts, in its various grades. The first step on the day of inauguration was to bring the sacred and venerable Tabernacle of the wilderness from Gibeon, where it still rose—worn, no doubt, and much repaired—as a local sanctuary. The ancient hangings of fine linen, leather, and camel's hair; the planks of acacia, tipped or plated with gold, silver, or

¹ 1 Kings viii. 30.

² 1 Kings vi. 1, 37, 38.

copper ; the bars and hooks ; the curtain of the entrance ; the ancient brazen altar ; the seven-branched candlestick and the table of shewbread, were borne on the shoulders of Levites to the new temple, everything being carried out in accordance with the rules laid down at Sinai nearly five hundred years before. Loud universal rejoicings greeted the procession as it moved along, amid strains of music, the singing of choirs of priests, and the festive dances of bands of maidens. Among other relics of the venerable past, men saw the mysterious form of the brazen serpent, which was afterwards erected either in the temple courts or somewhere in Jerusalem, beside an altar, on which incense was burnt before it.¹ The tabernacle raised in Zion by David was also taken down and borne with equal solemnity to the great centre on Moriah. The long winding pageant at last reached the sacred precincts. Entering them, all that belonged only to the past was carefully laid away in the store-chambers of the temple buildings. The Ark alone entered the Holy of Holies, and was solemnly deposited on the rough peak of the natural rock within, destined to be its final resting-place. A new covering had been prepared for it, and in removing the ancient one to substitute this, the interior was seen for the first and perhaps the last time since the days of Moses. The pot of manna, the rod or sceptre of Aaron, and his golden censer, once preserved beside or within it, were now gone, perhaps in the confusion and violence of its capture by the Philistines, or at the burning of Shiloh. Only the two tablets of the granite of Sinai remained, bearing the sacred characters in which were expressed the Ten Commandments.² The new covering shut down on these, they disappeared, to be seen no more, so far as we know. Inside the veil, on its rocky site, the Ark

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 4.

² 1 Kings viii. 9.

henceforth remained, under the wings of the overarching cherubim, hidden from all eyes till the destruction of the temple, except when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, once a year. As if to show that it would no more be removed, the staves on which it had anciently been borne were drawn out, so as to appear through the veil, and served to guide the steps of the high priest in his yearly advance into the thick darkness of the chamber. Besides the Ark, the ancient altar of incense and the table of shewbread were still kept for use in the Holy Place.

The people had gathered in vast throngs from every part—from the southern boundary of the land at the Wady el Arish, the River of Egypt, to Hamath, far north, on the Orontes—and crowded the temple area, outside the court of the priests. In this last, as many of the sacred orders as the space permitted now took their appointed places. A full choir of Levites, under Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, were at the east end of the great altar, with 120 priests, bearing the sacred trumpets.¹ A scaffold of polished brass, $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and 7 feet square,² had been placed for the king in the midst of the court, and to this he now approached, surrounded by all the magnificence which he so much loved; 500 guards attending him,³ with golden shields. The high officers of his court followed in their grandest robes. So great a monarch could not enter by the same gate as his subjects. A private door had been made specially for himself, connected with the palace on the slope of the hill behind, by a magnificent staircase of sandal-wood. The brazen scaffold served for a temporary throne.

An outburst of music from a multitude of performers and singers presently filled the air, the innumerable

¹ Chron. v. 12.

² 2 Chron. vi. 13.

³ 1 Kings xiv. 28.

spectators catching up the ever-recurring refrain—"For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever."¹ Meanwhile the temple was seen to be filled with a thick darkness, in which all recognised the cloud of the Presence,² once the symbol of the Divine glory over the Tabernacle of Sinai. So dense was it that it stopped the ministrations of the priests. But Solomon instantly caught its immense significance as a pledge of the acceptance of the temple by Jehovah as His dwelling-place, instead of the Tent of Meeting, which it superseded. Turning, therefore, to the people, he broke the silence such an awful appearance had imposed. "Jehovah," said he, "has said that He would dwell in the thick darkness," or, as the Targum reads, "in Jerusalem." "But I have built a house for Thee" (not a mere tent, as hitherto): "even a fixed place for Thy dwelling for ever."

Then, as if himself high priest as well as king, he proceeded to perform the supreme sacerdotal act by solemnly blessing the assembled people, who stood reverently before him. This ended, he went forward to the great altar.³ Here, instead of the usual standing posture in devotion, he knelt down,⁴ the first instance in Scripture of this attitude, and, stretching out his hands towards heaven, uttered a prayer of almost unequalled sublimity, that in all troubles of the nation or individuals, at home or in foreign lands, God might hear and answer the cries directed towards His holy hill. A second priestly benediction from his lips closed this part of the ceremonial.

The usual sacrifices on such an occasion now began on the grandest scale; 22,000 oxen, and no fewer than

¹ 2 Chron. v. 13.

² 2 Chron. v. 13. *Sept.*

³ 1 Kings viii. 22 "Stood before" = "went forward to."

⁴ 1 Kings viii. 54.

120,000 sheep, being offered in the aggregate; necessarily on successive days.¹ As fixed by the Law, however, only a small part of each victim was consumed; the rest was given to the people, that they might rejoice in a great sacred feast. But the huge brazen altar was too small for such hecatombs, and the inner court had to be consecrated in addition.² The Book of Chronicles adds that when the king had made an end of praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices.³ Foremost among the sacrificers, moreover, stood Solomon. It is expressly said that it was he, not Zadok the high priest, or any of his subordinates, who hallowed the inner court, and having done so, "offered," like a sacrificing priest, "burnt-offerings and the fat of the thank or peace-offerings."⁴

Such was the great feast of the dedication of the temple; an event of paramount importance in the Jewish history. The nation had now a fixed religious centre to which, as a mere work of human art, they could look with pride. In the past their God had only dwelt in curtains.⁵ The period of irregular local worship was closed, and the thoughts of all concentrated on a common sanctuary. Hitherto the Mosaic system had not had free development; now it was established in all its details, in the capital of the land. The priests and Levites, no longer the ministers of a mere tent like the Tabernacle, rose, by their official connection with the new sanctuary, to an importance they had never hitherto possessed, and to this Solomon forthwith gave adequate expression by

¹ The Greeks were accustomed to offer at times 450 bulls to Zeus and 500 goats to Artemis. Döllinger's *Gentile and Jew*, vol. i. p. 230.

² 2 Chron. vii. 7. In our version, "the middle of the court."

³ 2 Chron. vii. 1.

⁴ 2 Chron. vii. 7.

⁵ 1 Chron. xvii. 1.

formally adopting all the arrangements respecting them left by David, his father. But even in the hour of their highest glory they were strictly subordinated to the civil power. It was not one of their members, not even the high priest, who had presided throughout these august solemnities. The king alone prayed, blessed, offered, or consecrated. Nor was the priesthood thus controlled only on this occasion. They received from Solomon their organization and special appointments, and his will ruled them so absolutely in all things, that they did not dream of "departing from his commandments concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures."¹ Nor was the assertion of supreme authority over the Church merely temporary. Three times a year during his reign, on the great festivals, he not only sacrificed,² but even offered incense in the Holy Place, a function afterwards reserved for the priests alone.³ Thus in the fullest sense he claimed to act as both king and priest. In Egypt the priests ruled the State, controlling even the Pharaoh; elsewhere they formed a caste dominating the people; in Israel, the hierarchy from the first had no other than a moral power.

The temple, so wondrously consecrated by the visible symbol of God's presence, became from that moment the pride and glory of the nation, and, as years passed, the reverent love of a spot so holy rose almost to superstitious adoration. All that was best in the community turned to it alike in their joys and sorrows, in their moments of grateful thanksgiving and in their darkest trials. To see it periodically, and to worship in its courts, became the intensest desire of every Hebrew,

¹ 2 Chron. viii. 15. The gifts to the temple and the money received from the sacred tax.

² 2 Chron. viii. 13.

³ 1 Kings ix. 25.

wherever his lot might be cast. Three times a year long trains of pilgrims turned to it from every part of the land, and before the Passover, especially, vast multitudes crowded towards it from the most distant countries. Nor were these great national gatherings only occasions for listening to sermons or joining in sacrifices. They were the high festivals of the race, when all innocent delights brightened life. But even these fond associations were infinitely less tender and sacred than the spiritual links which bound Israel to the "Holy Place." In his thoughtful hours, especially when pressed with trial, the words of one of the Psalms became the instinctive utterance of every godly Hebrew,—

"One thing have I craved from Jehovah : that do I seek after:
To dwell in the House of Jehovah all the days of my life;
To look with glad eyes at the beauty of Jehovah,
And to refresh my soul at His Temple."¹

From "the land of Jordan and of the Hermons, from the hill Mizar," and from many other spots near or afar, rose the lament of those unable to go up to Jerusalem.

"As the hart pants (under the sultry sky) for brooks of water,
So pants my soul after Thee, O God !
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God—
When shall I come and appear before² God ?
My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say to me, 'Where is thy God ?'
When I remember it, my soul overflows with sorrow ;
How I used to go up with the multitude to Jerusalem ;
How I went with bands in procession to the House of God—
The multitude that kept the joyful feast
With the voice of praise and loud rejoicing !"

¹ Ps. xxvii. 4. ² Or "see." ³ Ps. xlii. 1-4. Apparently the cry of an exile from beyond Jordan, on his way to Babylon. Ewald, *Dichter*, vol. ii. p. 185. See also Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2.

The 84th Psalm is, throughout, a similar yearning of the inmost soul for a sight of the Holy Hill.

“How amiable is Thy abode, O Jehovah of Hosts!
My soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of Jehovah;
My heart and my flesh cry aloud for the living God.
The very sparrow finds a house, and the swallow a nest,
Where she lays her young
Beside Thine altars, O Jehovah of Hosts,
My King and my God!

Happy are they that dwell in Thy house,
They will be still praising Thee.

* * * * *

A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand:
I would rather lie at the threshold of the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”¹

So, in the hours of brightest rejoicing, a visit to Jerusalem and the temple was the ideal of happiness.

“I was glad when they said to me,
‘Let us go into the House of Jehovah.’

Our feet stand already within thy gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem, the close built city,
Dwelling on dwelling stand together in thee.
Thither the tribes go up—the tribes of Jehovah—
To the memorial feast of Israel.
To praise the name of Jehovah!
For there are set thrones for judgment,
Thrones of the House of David.”²

Once more, in another Psalm, we hear the same thought.

“Happy is the man whom Thou choosest,
And causest to approach unto Thee,
That he may dwell in Thy courts!

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 1-4, 10.

² Ps. cxxii. 1-5. *Herder's translation*.

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house—
Even of Thy holy temple.”¹

The fame of Solomon's magnificence naturally spread to all parts, through the wide commercial relations of his people. His palaces and gardens, at Jerusalem and elsewhere; his docks and fleet at Ezion-geber; his busy cities on the great lines of trade; the roads that connected them; his fortresses on the borders of his empire; the temple, and, not least, the great aqueducts and pools he constructed to bring water to his capital, were well fitted to strike the general mind with a sense of his grandeur. But the splendour and prosperity which showed in their fulness in the sovereign, shone also, with softer light, over the community. Apart from the substantial comfort and happiness of the masses, there was a wide display of luxury and wealth among the higher classes. Their mansions, erected on the hill Millo, transformed Jerusalem by their beauty. It had now four districts:—the old city, or Zion; the second city, to the north, divided from Zion by a valley; the Temple Hill, where the priests and Levites lived; and Ophel, on the south, the quarter of the temple slaves, the Gibeonites, or, as they were called later, the Nethinim, who hewed wood and drew water for the temple. In Ophel also, lived the despised class of mixers of unguents, apparently Phenicians. Others of the same nation had settled in the city as merchants, money changers, or money lenders. They formed a guild by themselves, under protection of a treaty between Hiram and Solomon, retaining their own laws, customs, and usages, and even celebrating their own idolatrous rites and worship.² Jerusalem and Israel at large were, in fact, gradually losing that safe

¹ Ps. lxx. 4.

² *Mövers*, vol. ii. 3, p. 115.

isolation which had in a great measure kept them from dangerous contact with the nations around.

The reports spread through distant regions doubtless attracted strangers in great number from motives of curiosity, profit, or religious feeling; for Solomon's sailors and traders must unconsciously have spread the name of the God who had blessed their king with such prosperity. Even the security and peace enjoyed under him would allure many from other lands to settle in his dominions, and not a few would be drawn, like Ruth, by the desire to put themselves under the safe protection of the "wings" of the God of Israel.¹

Among other distant countries to which fame had carried the name of Solomon, was Sabæa, or Sheba, on the Arabian coast of the Red Sea; a land renowned for its incense, balm, and myrrh, and reputed the richest of ancient times.² Great interest must have been felt in Jerusalem when it was learned that its queen had undertaken a camel journey from her remote dominions to see and hear for herself respecting the Wise King. This was heightened, when she came, by the splendour of her attendance and the richness of the gifts she presented to Solomon, as was usual on approaching a monarch. "She came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels," and "gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold,³ and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon."⁴ Orientals have always been fond of playing with riddles and intellectual puzzles, and by these this illustrious visitor tested the wisdom of Solomon, who readily solved

¹ Ruth ii. 12.

² See vol. i. p. 241.

³ £1,250,000. *Speaker's Com.*, 1 Kings ix. 14.

⁴ 1 Kings x. 2, 10.

all her questions. Legend has been busy with an account of them. She had dressed, we are told, 500 boys as girls, and 500 girls as boys, and collected 1000 carpets of gold and silver tissue, a crown adorned with pearls and diamonds, and a great quantity of perfumes. All these were sent to Jerusalem, and with them a single pearl, a diamond cut through in zigzags, and a crystal goblet in a box. Her envoy brought also a letter to Solomon, which intimated that, if he were really a prophet, he would tell which were boys and which girls, in the train of her ambassadors, guess the contents of the box, pierce the pearl, thread the diamond, and fill the goblet with water which came neither from earth nor heaven.

The king told the contents of the letter, we are informed, before it was opened; distinguished the boys from the girls as they washed their hands; the boys only dipping their hands in the water, the girls tucking up their sleeves to their shoulders, and washing their arms as well; by the help of a magic stone he drilled a hole through the pearl at once; and he threaded the diamond by making a worm pass through it, with a fine thread in its mouth. The crystal goblet he filled with water gathered from the sweat of a wild horse ridden furiously over the plain.¹

The simple narrative of the Bible is infinitely better, however, than these wild inventions. The Arab queen "communed with Solomon of all that was in her heart," and received answers to all her questions. But his magnificence seems to have filled her with as much wonder as his wisdom. "The house which he had built, the meat of his table, the sitting of his servants, the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and

¹ B. Gould, *Old Testament Legends*, vol. ii. pp. 196, 197.

their apparel ; and the ascent by which he went up into the House of the Lord,"¹ especially roused her admiration. The pomp and expenditure of such a court may, indeed, well have been overpowering to a simple stranger ; for Solomon, we are told, received each year, in gold alone, 666 talents, nearly £7,000,000 sterling, besides his revenue from the taxes on merchants and traders, and the vast gifts brought by subject kings and princes.² A memorial of the visit was believed to remain in the balsam plantations at Jericho.³ The Abyssinians, moreover, encouraged by the title—Queen of the South—given her in the Gospels⁴ and in the Arabic version, boast of her as the ancestress, through Solomon, of their kings ; but the claims of Arabia as the seat of her kingdom strip the African monarchy of any such doubtful honour.

¹ 2 Chron. ix. 3, 4.

² 2 Chron. ix. 13, 14.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. vi. 6.

⁴ Matt. xii. 42.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE LATER DAYS OF SOLOMON.

THE high prosperity of Israel under Solomon continued throughout his reign, though not without ominous indications of approaching evil as he grew older. "Our sons," says an ancient Psalm ascribed by most critics to this period,¹ "are grown up in their youth like stately plants; our daughters are like polished corner pillars, the ornaments of a palace; our garners are full, giving forth all manner of store; our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields; our oxen are great with young; there is no breach of our walls by a foe; no sallying out in defence; no battle cry in our streets. Happy is the people whose lot is such; happy is the people of whom Jehovah is God."

But the highest glory of Solomon's age lay neither in such wide material prosperity, nor in the extent of his empire, nor in his fame as a great builder. In this last respect, indeed, he stood far below not a few kings of Babylon and Egypt. Israel had a higher and nobler boast in its quickened intellectual activity, to which the Church and the world owe abiding gratitude. While Assyria, Babylon, and Phenicia, though Semitic states,

¹ Ps. cxliv. 12-14. Thought by Ewald, Hitzig, Hupfeld, Delitzsch, Moll, and others to be a fragment from another Psalm, and distinct from what precedes and follows.

can hardly be said to have had a literature, notwithstanding their high civilization, there burst out in Palestine, during Solomon's reign, a fulness of mental energy in many directions, marked alike by its originality and its surpassing results.

To this period must be referred the rise of a wide historical literature in Israel. The Book of the Law, as the Pentateuch was termed, had indeed been the priceless treasure of many past generations;¹ the Book of Jasher had been compiled; that of "Joshua" had been composed, at latest, in the beginning of the reign of Saul; the Books of Judges and Ruth in that of David.² To that king, also, the nation had been indebted for the first collection of Psalms. But it was in the peaceful and happy days of Solomon, when the long national struggles were over, that Jewish literature developed itself most freely, as that of Greece was destined to do at the close of the Persian War. It must have been soon after David's death that Nathan and Gad wrote his life.³ From Solomon's reign we find regular chronicles of the kingdom written by a State official,⁴ and the Books of Samuel seem to have been put in their present form during the Wise King's life by some inspired prophet-author of the day.

¹ I follow Keil's judgment as to the dates of the sacred books. It is quite impossible to reconcile the theories of Bleek, De Wette, Ewald, Holtzmann, Kuenen, Wellhausen, and Stade. Nor do I think the late origin of Leviticus and Deuteronomy at all proved. With due respect for Professor Robertson Smith, I cannot help thinking his hypotheses are like inverted pyramids—a great deal resting on very little. Of course, I do not hesitate to admit that the earliest sacred books may have been more than once revised by men inspired to do so.

² See table in *Lange's* "Genesis."

³ 1 Chron. xxix. 29.

⁴ 1 Kings xi. 41.

A broad stream of religious poetry, which had its rise in the time of David, distinguishes that of his great son, and henceforth flows on in majestic fulness to the latest times of Jewish history. Seventy-one Psalms are ascribed to David in the superscriptions, while only the 72nd and the 127th bear the name of Solomon, though the 2nd and the 132nd are thought by some to be also his. It is recorded, however, that he wrote no fewer than 1,005 songs,¹ now nearly all lost; many of them doubtless religious, but not a few, in all probability, not directly so. Eighteen apocryphal Psalms of Solomon are still extant in a Greek translation, but they belong to a much later date. Such a time of national glory, however, produced, as might have been expected, a whole series of poets, singers, and thinkers, of whom the names of Ethan or Jeduthun, Asaph, Heman, Chalkol, and Darda still remain.²

The special literary feature of the Solomonic age, nevertheless, was not its poetry, but rather the compositions henceforward distinctively associated with the name of Wisdom. Hitherto the expression had been rarely used, so far as we know; but from Solomon's day, it occurs at least 300 times in Scripture. A new class of men sprang up, distinct from prophets and priests, and known as the Wise.³ The rest and leisure prevailing, and the example of the king himself, led reflective minds from details of history, or the emotions of poetry, to meditate on the relations of man and the world to God; to investigate their laws, in illustration of Divine Order and Truth, and to inquire into their causes, grounds, and aims. Such studies were necessarily religious, for it was a fundamental principle in Israel that "the fear of God was the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One

¹ 1 Kings iv. 32.

² 1 Kings iv. 31.

³ Prov. i. 6; iii. 35; x. 8.

understanding.”¹ The mysteries of Providence as developed in the many-coloured life around irresistibly attracted graver spirits. Intercourse with foreign peoples had widened the intellectual range of the nation, bringing before it new faiths and modes of thought, and larger ideas of the great problems of the universe. The wisdom of the East and of Egypt, by their attempts at the solution of the mysterious questions of life, naturally incited the study of these from the Hebrew point of view also. Phenicia and Sheba brought men in contact with fresh lines of thought, and even the musings of the sages of India may have reached Jerusalem through the commerce with distant Ophir.

The incomparable superiority of Hebrew Wisdom to that of all other ancient nations is, however, beyond dispute. Nor is it difficult to understand the cause. While, among other races, philosophy speculated on questions altogether beyond our faculties, in Israel it contented itself with accepting the great first truths of religion, and only strove to discover their practical bearings. India might elaborate metaphysics, the Jew contented himself with faith; the Aryan intellect might seek to think everything out for itself, the Hebrew received revealed doctrines with a calm and resolute faith. The “Wisdom” of the one pursued cold and airy abstractions, which the keenest thought is unable to follow beyond a certain length; that of the other derived its power and depth from a living relation to the Holy God; a sense of His nearness, His perfections, and His inflexible laws. Other “wisdom” is distinct from morality; that of Israel demands it in its highest and purest sense. According to it, all right action rests on the fear of the Lord, who searches the heart and knows all things. The

¹ Prov. ix. 10. *Delitzsch.*

wisdom¹ thus learned creates true humility; is the root of all earnest efforts after perfection; insists that no man is free from sin; urges him to a frank confession of sinfulness; teaches him to watch his thoughts and life, and impels him to a fruitful self examination, which is the ultimate condition of spiritual health.²

The creation of this religious philosophy, as it may be called, in Israel, is one of the great distinctions of Solomon. In harmony with the form it assumed in other Oriental nations, it expressed itself in the shape of short pointed sayings, known as Proverbs. In these were embodied weighty opinions in the most sententious form on the great questions of life—its ends, its difficulties, and the true principles for its guidance. The word is scarcely used before Solomon's day, though Balaam's prophecies are called "proverbs;"³ and Jotham, Nathan, and the woman of Tekoah had already used the allied form of a parable. With Solomon, however, the use of proverbs is especially associated. He wrote, we are told, no fewer than 3,000, but of these many are lost, for the Book of Proverbs contains only 915 verses, and the last two chapters are expressly assigned to other authors. Yet the whole book bears the impress of his genius and that of his age. Gold, silver, and precious stones are now for the first time made the subject of frequent allusions; the busy ways of commerce are introduced, and much is said on the duties and authority of kings.⁴ As might have been expected also from an age in which Solomon set the

¹ Prov. x. 27; xiv. 27; xv. 3, 33; xvii. 3; xix. 21, 23; xxii. 4.

² Prov. i. 7; vi. 23; viii. 10; xv. 23; xx. 9; xxviii. 13.

³ Num. xxiii. 7, 18; xxiv. 3, 15, 20, 21, 23.

⁴ Prov. i. 9; iii. 14, 15; vii. 16, 17; viii. 10, 11; x. 20; xiv. 28; xvi. 10-15, 16; xvii. 3; xx. 15; xxii. 1; xxv. 4; xxvii. 21; xxxi. 10; xxxi. 14, 21-24, etc.

example of the study of nature, lessons are drawn from the habits and instincts of the lower creation. We have, further, the first ideas of systematic education and training, and the earliest pictures of character, as was natural in the waking of the general mind to the laws and conditions of human society. Examples are also given of the riddles which delighted the Queen of Sheba, and Hiram of Tyre, and Solomon himself.

The Book of Proverbs is the concentrated wisdom of clear and devout intellects, looking at religion from the practical side. Its central principle, as has been noticed, is that goodness is wisdom, and vice and wickedness, folly; that, in short, even apart from the sin of evil doing, it is the greatest mistake; that, in the words of Carlyle, "the worst figure of misfortune is misconduct." Compared with the "proverbs" of other nations, its whole tone and spirit are indefinitely loftier; its wisdom, immeasurably more searching and profound. The contrast, indeed, must always bring out with ever clearer light the spiritual grandeur of Israel compared with the mere human prudence embodied in the "wisdom" of other ancient races. Only a high religious and moral culture could have looked on life in a way so intensely human on the one side, and nobly spiritual on the other, and have reconciled both in utterances so striking and true. The great conceptions of God and duty in their widest relations must have long filled the Hebrew mind before such compositions were possible.

The influence on Jewish literature of the new study and exposition of "Wisdom" thus introduced, was wide and permanent. The Book of Job is an illustration of its presence in spheres strangely outside the usual limits of Hebrew thought and customs. The introduction of lessons from animate and inanimate nature; the identifi-

cation of Wisdom with the fear of God ; the great problem discussed—the reconciliation of the Divire goodness and justice with the distribution of evil and prosperity among men, link it closely to the Book of Ecclesiastes and to some of the Psalms. These, also, are part of the “Wisdom” literature, but it extended beyond them to a later period. Long after, an Alexandrian Jew wrote “The Wisdom of Solomon ;” and “Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach,” was a continuation of the same class of composition, dating from the second century before Christ.¹ It will be seen also, hereafter, how the personification of Wisdom gradually lent itself to Messianic ideas after the close of the Canon, and paved the way for conceptions adopted in the New Testament itself.

Another production which marks the literary development of Solomon’s reign is the Song of Songs, or Canticles.² No book has been more variously interpreted by Jewish and Christian scholars. Men like Michaelis, Jacobi, Herder, Umbreit, Ewald, Delitzsch, Pye-Smith, and Ginsburg, some of them nobly orthodox, see in it a charming poem designed to teach a lesson of practical goodness, and to exalt the glory of pure and honourable married life. The simple story, it is maintained by this school, is as follows. A village girl, the daughter of a widow of Shulēm,³ north of Jezreel, is betrothed to a young shepherd, whom she had met while tending his flock. To guard against possible scandal from the frequent interviews of the lovers, her brothers employ her in their vineyard. On the way to this she one day meets Solomon, as he is making a grand progress through

¹ Schenkel’s *Lex.*, art. *Jesus Sirach*.

² Even Ewald assigns it to the age, if not to the pen, of Solomon.

³ The present Sulem. *Conder*.

the land. Struck with her beauty, the king orders her to be taken charge of for him, brings her to his splendid tent, and thence, with great pomp, to Jerusalem, where he finally puts her into his harem, in hope that the honour shown her, and the magnificence round her, may win her to accept him as her lover. But all is useless. True to her shepherd, she resists the royal blandishments, and turns a deaf ear to all his promises to raise her to the highest rank. Her betrothed has followed her to the capital, and having gained a meeting with her, is assured that she is faithfully and for ever his. In the end Solomon feels that he cannot change her mind, and allows her to return home. The two faithful ones go off together, hand in hand, from the palace, and on their way to their native village renew, under the tree where they first met, their pledge of deathless love. On their arrival they are welcomed by the other shepherds, and the maiden is rewarded by her brothers for her matchless constancy and incorruptible virtue.

As an allegory, the poem is naturally susceptible of many interpretations, but it is neither desirable nor, indeed, possible to enter into these fully. Hengstenberg, one of the latest upholders of an allegorical interpretation, understands that in the first part we meet with the heavenly Solomon, the Messiah, whose advent is preceded by severe afflictions of the Church from the powers of the world. Through means of the ancient people of God, the heathen are received into the kingdom of Christ. In the second part, there are first sin and judgment; then repentance and reconciliation through the influence of the daughters of Jerusalem, that is, of the heathen; and last, full restoration of the old relation of love, in consequence of which the daughter of Zion again becomes the centre of the kingdom of God; the

covenant thus renewed enduring for ever. Whichever view be adopted—and men of the purest loyalty to revelation are found holding each—it cannot be said that even the humbler is unworthy a place in the Canon, for morality and religion in a nation rest on the chaste purity of betrothed or married love, and an enforcement of this was supremely needed in Israel, where polygamy exerted so baleful an influence. Hence, as in Proverbs we constantly meet the praise of a pure and virtuous wife, many believe that they recognise in the Song of Songs a similar commendation of true and chaste love before marriage.¹

But the breadth of mind in Solomon which expended itself in proverbs, and sacred or moral compositions, was not confined to these. He, first, so far as we know, gave himself to the scientific study of nature. “He spake,” we are told, “of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon to the moss² that springs out of the wall,” and also “of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things and of fishes.”³ His capacious intellect could leave no region of knowledge unexplored. Josephus, indeed, expands the list of his attainments and mental achievements to the incredible, for besides an intimate knowledge of all vegetable and animal nature, he adds that he wrote parables on each kind of creature or plant.⁴ Nor was even this enough. He was the greatest magician of any age, and could cast out devils at his

¹ The fascination which Canticles has always had for devout spirits is not to be forgotten. It was the favourite book of St. Bernard, and no less dear to Leighton, Jeremy Taylor, and John Bunyan.

² So most translators.

³ 1 Kings iv. 33.

⁴ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. ii. 5. Graetz adopts this view.

will. Arabic legend, indeed, makes him understand the languages of beasts and birds; control the genii by a wondrous ring; ride on their wings with lightning speed; make them build cities for him, and in all ways act as his slaves. Josephus contents himself with telling us that incantations, said to have been invented by Solomon, for the cure of diseases, and exorcisms for casting out devils, were still in use in Palestine in his own day.¹

It is a curious but distinguishing feature of Eastern character, that a mind so all embracing should have earned apparently its highest intellectual fame among its contemporaries, from its skill in propounding and solving hard questions and riddles. Such, however, is the fact. In the legends associated with the visit of the Queen of Sheba, this has already been noticed. The highest personages in the East have, indeed, in all ages delighted in such play of words and tests of mental quickness. Syrian historians say that Hiram maintained a constant interchange of riddles with Solomon, who, however, was successful in explaining most of those submitted to him, till at last a Syrian boy got the victory by not only solving some which had foiled the wise king, but by proposing others beyond his powers to explain.² These intellectual puzzles were not, however, like those familiar to us in the West. They seem rather to have been a form of question and answer thrown into a poetical form, in many cases serious enough. Examples still occur, indeed, in Proverbs, showing that the experiences of life were often made the bases in them of useful or instructive reflections. Thus we have the question asked :

¹ *Ant.*, VIII. ii. 5.

² *Jos.*, *Contra Apion*, i. 17, 18. *Ant.*, VIII. v. 3.

“There are three things which are never satisfied,
And a fourth which never says ‘enough,’ (What are they?)

A. The grave (sheol) and the barren womb,
The (parched) earth which cries for water,
And fire, which never says ‘enough.’¹

Q. Three things are wonderful to me,
And a fourth I do not understand?

A. The way of the eagle in the heavens,
The way of the serpent on the rock,
The way of the shipman on the sea,
And the way of ■ man with a maiden.²

Q. Under three things the earth is troubled,
Under a fourth it can no longer endure?

A. Under ■ slave when he rises to power,
Under a low man when he is full of bread,
Under ■ hateful woman when she is married,
And under a female slave when she takes the place of³ her
mistress.

Q. Four things are small on the earth,
Yet are they wise and clever?

A. The ants, a weak little folk,
Prepare their food beforehand in the harvest;
The conies⁴ are a feeble little folk,

¹ Prov. xxx. 15-31.

² All four leave no trace behind.

³ Ewald, “is heir to.” Gesenius, “dispossesses.”

⁴ The coney (*Hyrax Syriacus*) is no larger than a rabbit, and has a soft fur. It is, however, neither a ruminant nor a rodent, but is classified by naturalists between the hippopotamus and the rhinoceros. There are no rabbits in Palestine, but the coney is very like them in its habits and manners. Difficulty has been found in its being classed in Leviticus with creatures that chew the cud. But the Hebrew word simply means “chew over again,” and no one can watch the constant motion of the creature’s jaws without feeling the naturalness of the expression, which the law-

But they make their houses in the rocks;
 The locusts have no king,
 Yet they march out in armies;
 The lizard you may catch with your hands,
 Yet she dwells in the palaces of kings.¹

The condition of Israel in these days of its highest glory was a strange union of simplicity and Oriental luxury. Almost five hundred years had passed since the Exodus, and in that time the tent had disappeared, except in the wilderness pastures, and houses had taken its place. The tops of the hills were covered with towns; open spaces for grazing, with their picturesque flocks and shepherds, were no longer seen in the heart of the land; fields of grain covered the valleys and the soft upland slopes, yielding copious harvests when the rains had duly fallen. Every valley was rich in shady trees and luscious fruits. Vineyards ran along the hill sides, their clusters drawing sap from the carefully tilled earth, and colour from the unclouded sun. "Men bound their asses to the vine, and their ass's colt to the choice grape; they washed their garments in wine, and dipped their clothes in the blood of grapes. Their faces were red with wine, and their teeth white with milk."² Agriculture, gardening and the culture of the vine were the chief occupations under Solomon.

The spread of commerce with foreign countries had led to improvements in the medium of exchange. In ancient times value had been reckoned in sheep,³ only barter prevailing; circular pieces of silver⁴ had afterwards come into use, but Solomon found it necessary to fix the

giver uses as describing appearances, not as a scientific definition. Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 76.

¹ Graetz and Delitzsch.

² Gen. xlix. 11, 12.

³ Kesitah.

⁴ Gerah.

worth of the precious metals, as Babylon and Phenicia had done, according to a prescribed scale. A pebble of a certain weight—the shekel—formed a unit of calculation, and was known as the Royal Stone.¹ The great shekel bore the name of the sacred weight. For large transactions, heavier pieces of silver and gold, of disc form, were prepared, weighing 3,000 shekels. Measures of length, and surface, and of capacity, were also developed.²

The Hebrews do not seem to have thought, as yet, in those times, of dividing the day into hours. They spoke of morning, noon, and evening, and the night was divided into three watches. The day was reckoned from sunset to sunset.³ The week was not of ten days, as among the Egyptians, who reckoned by the sun, but of seven days, from the changes of the moon, the circuit of which formed the national calendar. Every new moon was a feast day, but it is not known how the excess of nearly two days a month was made to agree with the calculation by weeks. The common year began with the close of harvest,⁴ but the ecclesiastical dated from the anniversary of the Exodus in spring, and the harvest feast of Tabernacles fell in the seventh month.⁵ Whether the regulation of the religious calendar for each year was in the hands of a special commission, or left to the priests, is not known.⁶ In public life, however, it began to be the custom to date from the accession of kings, in imitation of the Egyptian practice.

The population was divided into three or four classes: the pure Hebrews, who formed the ruling caste; native Canaanites, who had gradually sunk in social position, till, under Solomon, they were finally degraded to more or

Eben ha Melech. Stone weights were common. Deut. xxv 13 (Heb.). Prov. xvi. 11. ² *Graetz*, vol. i p. 334. ³ Lev. xxiii. 32. Excd. xxiii. 16; xxxiv. 22 ⁵ Num. xxix. 12 ⁶ *Graetz*, vol. i p. 335.

less complete serfdom ; foreigners who had settled in the land for trade or security ; and slaves, either taken in the old wars, or Canaanites who had sold away their freedom.¹ The whole of the Gibeonites, as we have seen, had been made over to the priests as temple slaves, to cut wood and draw water for the altar, and for other menial work.² Fragments of the old native clans, who lived near Jerusalem, were apparently used as slaves of the palace, and for public servile work generally—though some of them, it would appear were, rather, serfs, with part of their time at their own control, and supporting themselves as labourers or mechanics.³

In the eyes of the law, all men, in the most vital respects, were equal. No distinction was made between the life of an Israelite and of a slave ; whoever murdered either must die, for all men were made in the image of God. Even as late as the middle ages the guilt of killing a bondman was reckoned trifling compared with that of killing a freeman, but there was no such artificial rule among the Hebrews. The master who did his slave a bodily injury was forced to set him free. But the hot blood of the South maintained a terrible evil in the form of blood revenge. It was a sacred obligation on the next of kin to a murdered person to avenge his death by killing the homicide or murderer. But the law sought to mitigate what it could not uproot, by the provision of cities of refuge for any one, whether Israelite, foreigner, or Canaanite, who had unintentionally taken life.⁴ The trial of causes and the punishment of the guilty had originally been left to the elders who represented each

¹ Lev. xxv. 44, the slaves bought with money. See *Monatsschr.* (Frankel-Graetz), 1871, p. 239.

² Josh. ix. 23.

³ *Graetz*, vol. i. p. 336.

⁴ See vol. ii. p. 430. Num. xxxv. 15.

town or community, but, under the kings, judges seem to have been named by the Crown¹ for graver questions; the old tribunals still retaining their power in simpler matters. Trials took place in the open air, at the town gate, where there is always an open space, and the greatest concourse. The judge sat in the middle of the crowd, which stood in circles round, according to their social rank.²

God Himself was regarded as the source of all law, and the protector of the innocent. He was the judge of the whole earth, to whom wickedness was an abomination. Trials were therefore considered as held in His sight; His unseen presence watching that justice was done. Two witnesses at least were required for condemnation. The scribe or notary of the court was charged with seeing the sentence carried out. The law, however, prescribed, in humane distinction from that of many ancient communities, that in cases of capital offence, only the immediately guilty should die, so that, for example, children should not be put to death for the crime of their parent. This, however, was not always observed, as the execution of Saul's descendants, for his offence at Gibeon, only too sadly shows.³

It was also a noble provision of the Hebrew law that there should be no poor in the nation. The kindred of an impoverished man were required to restore him to a simple independence.⁴ All debt was cancelled at the end of each seven years, and if a patrimony had been alienated and not redeemed, it reverted to the original owner or his family in the fiftieth year.⁵ An Israelite

¹ 2 Chron. xix. 5.

² Exod. xviii. 14. Deut. xxii. 15; xxv. 7. Lam. v. 14. Amos v. 15.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 6.

⁴ Deut. xv. 4.

⁵ Lev. xxv. 25.

who had sold himself to pay his obligations was free in the seventh year. But it is a question how far these laws were in force during the reign of Solomon. The Levites, at least, had no part in the beneficent provisions regarding property, for they had no tribal district assigned them. But their wants were supplied on a moderate scale. The priests were charged with the maintenance of their brethren, who aided them in the temple sacrifices; part of the offerings and gifts being assigned to them. Those Levites, however, who had other functions—the watchers of the temple gates, the underhelpers at the offerings, and the singers and musicians—had no share in the sacrifices or sacred gifts. They depended on tithes, which Solomon appears to have strictly exacted in their behalf, though Hezekiah is first mentioned as having formally assigned them as their right.¹ The Levites who were not on duty at the temple lived in the Levitical towns throughout the various tribes, and perhaps engaged in the instruction of the people. Poor by birth, and without the prospect of a share in the wealth open to all others, they were yet well cared for during Solomon's reign.

But the long and bright summer day of the great king's reign was fated to set with gloomy indications of gathering evil. Notwithstanding the amazing prosperity which his peaceful commercial policy spread throughout the land, it must very soon have been felt how seriously the ancient liberties of the nation were endangered by the centralization he had introduced, and by his undue exaltation of the throne. Hitherto they had been the freest of all ancient communities, but Solomon was founding a monarchy which threatened to reduce them, under his successors, to the level of the subjects of an Oriental

¹ 2 Chron xxxi. 4.

despotism. They might have borne any outlay for the temple, as for a great national undertaking, without a murmur. But it was different when vast sums were sunk in successive royal palaces on the grandest scale, and on a civil list which exhausted the resources of provinces. To maintain such a harem as had been created, with its army of attendants; such numberless officials of all grades as the magnificence of the court demanded; such personal expenditure as the imperial tastes of Solomon involved, was to enslave the country for the glory of an individual. Israel had been unused to taxes, but burdens of many kinds now pressed on all in the most irritating forms—not for national objects, but for the maintenance of a luxurious court. The private domain of the Crown had hitherto in large measure sufficed to meet the necessary cost, and was regarded as the basis of the revenue.¹ But not even the immense sum received for tribute from subject nations; the rich gifts of noble and royal visitors and embassies; or the large amounts from foreign commerce carried on for the king, and from licences to trade, sold to merchants, were enough to meet the constant drain of the palace expenditure. Tithes and first-fruits had been long recognised as an established tax from the land to its Lord and Protector, Jehovah; but as the condition of things changed, these were appropriated largely by Solomon to his own uses, ostensibly for national purposes.² The division of the whole country into twelve revenue districts was a serious grievance, especially as the high official over each could make large profits from the excess of contributions demanded.³ The old Canaanite

¹ Isa. iii. 6, 7.

² *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 402.

³ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 405. A comparison of the lists of the Canaanite towns in Israel (Jud. i.) and the districts of the collectors

population doubtless shared this dissatisfaction, for the royal burdens must have been made specially onerous in their case. It seems probable, indeed, that, at least in the later years of Solomon's reign, a poll tax was levied universally, on Israelite and Canaanite alike—though such a tax was equally hateful to both. The imposts, in fact, became in the end so unendurable, that they contributed largely to the secession of the ten tribes.

Another grievance that sapped the loyalty of the people was the systematic enforcement of compulsory or virtually slave labour, to carry out the various schemes of the king. The temple; the vast series of royal buildings at Jerusalem; the fortifications of that city; the erection of strongholds at different points; the construction of the great royal roads; the creation of the royal gardens and parks; the building of the huge aqueducts and reservoirs at the capital, and much else, had required an amount of labour which could not be obtained by ordinary means. Even Solomon's revenues would not, indeed, have met the cost of it, had they been available. In imitation of the Pharaohs, therefore, he established and enforced a system of forced, unpaid labour, on the community at large. At first, however, this was demanded only from the remnants of the Canaanites. They had, indeed, been subjected to this serfdom in the later years of David's reign,¹ but the yoke was now laid on them much more heavily. Thirty thousand men were drafted to toil in the forests of Lebanon and in the quarries at Jerusalem, felling trees and hewing vast stones; 10,000 serving a month in rotation, with an interval

under Solomon shows that these towns were their special headquarters, doubtless as the points most heavily taxed (see 1 Kings iv. 819).

¹ 2 Sam. xx 24. Tribute = forced levies.

of two months at home, to attend to their own affairs; a tax of four months' labour a year from each of the 30,000.¹ But even this army of unwilling labourers was insufficient, as the buildings and other undertakings of the king increased.² A levy was therefore raised from "all Israel,"³ not from the Canaanites only,⁴ amounting to 70,000 men to carry loads, and 80,000 to hew down and square timber in Lebanon, and to quarry and prepare building stones: 3,300 overseers watching that the tasks were performed. How great the suffering imposed by these *corvées* must have been, is easy to imagine. Continued through years, involving exposure for months together on the mountains, or toil in the darkness of quarries worked like mines, where the smoke of their torches, used in the thick darkness, may still be seen,⁵—they must have been fatal to many. But besides all this, there was the exhausting labour of moving huge trees to the distant sea-shore; and on their reaching Joppa, dragging them up the steep mountain passes to Jerusalem; or transporting immense blocks of stone on rough sledges, from the quarries to the temple site on Mount Moriah. Forced labour in the East has in all ages been as fatal as war, and it was probably as destructive in Solomon's time.⁶

Nor could it have been without a hurtful effect that,

¹ 1 Kings v. 13, 14.

² 1 Kings v. 15, 16.

³ 1 Kings v. 13.

⁴ In 1 Kings ix. 22 it is said that only Canaanites were subjected to forced labour, but this appears rather a general expression for the fact that the Canaanites bore the far heavier burden, as we find in, 1 Kings xi. 28 that Jeroboam, the master of the public works, was "over all the charge of the house of Joseph." The word charge is elsewhere translated "burdens." Thenius and Ewald translate it "forced labour."

⁵ In the quarries under Jerusalem.

⁶ See vol. ii. p. 79.

after supplying the labourers for twenty years with an annual amount of grain, wine, and oil, which itself was a heavy tax, Solomon found himself so much in debt to Hiram, for money advanced and materials bought, that he had to alienate to him twenty towns in Galilee, near the Phenician border. It would do little to smooth down offended national pride that, with Oriental sharpness, he obtained 120 talents of gold in abatement of the gift, or that the wit of the Syrians made light of their king's bargain by calling the district Cabul, "how little!"¹ No king can afford to give away permanently any part of his dominions.

The relations of Solomon to the priesthood and the prophets, with whom his authority was, in its basis, so closely connected, tended also to weaken the kingdom. The wide extent of the empire, embracing many heathen nations and communities, made it difficult, if not impossible, to retain the strict intolerance which the laws of Moses demanded. It had not, indeed, been at any time rigidly enforced, for heathen towns even in the limits of Israel had always, apparently, retained their idolatrous worship. But now that Ammon, Moab, Syria, Edom, and the Philistine country were under Solomon, and Israel had been thus opened to intercourse with them, toleration seemed a necessity. Numbers of each heathen race, as, for example, of the Phenicians, had settled in Jerusalem and elsewhere; and Solomon, to bind the subject people to his throne, had married heathen princesses from Sidon, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and the Hittite tribes. Whether from a desire to propitiate the resident foreign population by tolerating their religions, or from a weak and sinful

¹ 1 Kings ix. 13. There is still a village called "Kabul" about eight miles slightly S.E. of Acre. Furrer's *Palästina*. p. 299 Kiepert's Map.

indifference which treated such matters lightly, he permitted a high place¹ to be built for Chemosh, "the abomination of the Moabites," on "the hill east of Jerusalem"—traditionally, on the south side of the Hill of Offence; for Moloch, the abomination of the children of Ammon; and for each of the other gods of "all his foreign wives."² Incense and the smoke of sacrifices to idols—such sacrifices, in some cases, as even nature abhors—were thus seen rising close to the temple of Jehovah, and under the very walls of the holy city. It would be pleasant to think that Solomon himself took no part in such rites, but it is expressly said that he "went after Ashtoreth and Milcom, or Moloch."³ Such desecration of all that was sacred must have prejudiced the priesthood against the throne, and would spread from them through the people. Nor was it less fatal in its results on the attitude of the prophets. David, like Solomon, had always kept the priesthood in the strictest dependence, but he had known how to reconcile his own dignity with loyalty to the prophets, of whom Gad and Nathan were his familiar and honoured advisers. Even at the beginning of Solomon's reign these two independent powers worked together in harmony, for Nathan had been the chief agent in securing his succession. But from the time of that seer's death, which took place apparently soon after that of David, we hear no more of any prophet acting with Solomon. Relying on

¹ The modern peasants of Palestine still worship at what they call the Mukam or High Place, not in mosques, which are very rare. The Mukam is a building of about ten feet square, on a hill top, and has a round dome carefully white-washed, and a praying place on the south wall. *Conder*.

² 1 Kings xi. 7, 8.

³ 1 Kings xi. 5. Mill's *Samaritans*, p. 269.

his own "wisdom," he seems to have thought that he could do without such interference. But his course with regard to idolatry brought to a head the slumbering inquiet which such a state of things had long caused. Towards the middle and close of his reign, we hear again of prophets, like Ahijah of Shiloh, and Shemaiah, and Iddo, who survived the king about twenty years.¹ But their relation to the throne had changed. Nathan had been not only the tried friend and councillor of early days; his two sons had supported the king as ministers. The younger race of prophets, however, turned wholly against him, from the conviction that, under his rule, Israel was being transformed into a despotism which imperilled the liberties of the nation and the interests of religion. Nothing could be more disastrous, for the glory of the past had been the direct result of the harmonious working together of prophets and kings, not by defined laws or formal agreement, but by hearty sympathy. But Solomon's exalted ideas of kingship, and perhaps the remembrance of the Divine promise that he should receive an especial gift of wisdom, had led him gradually to act alone; not in opposition to the prophets, but simply apart from them. It was doubtless his sincere belief that, in a case like his, "a Divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment."² Nor could any one have understood better the conditions of a noble and happy reign. It was a saying of his that "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."³ "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but He honoureth him that hath mercy on the poor," was one of his proverbs.⁴ Others were in keeping. "It is an abomination to kings

¹ 2 Chron. xii. 13, 15, 22.² Prov. xvi. 10.³ Prov. xiv. 34.⁴ Prov. xiv. 31.

to commit wickedness : for the throne is established by righteousness.”¹ “A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment sifteth away all evil with his eyes.”² “A wise king sifteth the wicked, and tears them to pieces under the threshing sledge.”³ “The king’s heart is in the hand of Jehovah; as the streams of water He turns it whithersoever He will.”⁴ “Mercy and truth are the defence of a king : his throne is upholden by mercy.”⁵ And as if holding the mirror up unconsciously to his own course, at least in his later years, he tells us that to oppress the people is a sign of the want of understanding in a prince, and to hate gains thus secured is the condition of a long life on the throne.⁶ But, as in many other cases, he had been wise for others rather than himself. The prophets had perhaps expected that in him they would rejoice over the ideal king for whom they and the best of the nation were longing, who should unite the loftiest devotion to God with the purest wisdom and integrity in his human relations ; such a king as was described in the Law,⁷ and as Nathan had spoken of to David, as hereafter to be settled over the house and kingdom of Jehovah for ever.⁸ But they had slowly come to see their hopes disappointed, and had been forced to believe their expectations of such a “Messiah” as not borne out ; as, indeed, had they known it, must have been the case with any sinful and imperfect man ; the true Messiah, then still far distant, being of an infinitely different type.

The friendly relations with heathen countries around ;

¹ Prov. xvi. 12.

² Prov. xx. 8.

³ Prov. xx. 26. So Hitzig, Ewald.

⁴ Prov. xxi. 1.

⁵ Prov. xx. 28.

⁶ Prov. xxviii. 16 ; see also xxix. 4 ; xii. 14.

⁷ Deut. xvii. 14.

⁸ 1 Chron. xvii. 14.

their absorption into the empire; the influence of their populations, to whom the land was now open; the temptation to follow, in religion and morals, communities so much more advanced in arts and culture; and, withal, the natural tendency of national wealth to luxury and its vices, had further excited profound dissatisfaction in the best and most solid portion of the community, and also in the prophets—the representatives of ancient simplicity and obedience to the law of God, as the true King of Israel. Things had, indeed, completely changed since the Syrian conquests of David. Instead of a secluded nation of shepherds and farmers, Israel had become the centre of a wide and restless commercial activity, which brought its people into contact with all the world. Almost the whole trade of the earth, as it then was, passed through the territories of Solomon. Nothing could reach Tyre from Asia or Arabia except over Hebrew soil; nothing be exported to either except across it. The entrance to Egypt and the routes from it were through Palestine. Phenicians, Arabs, Babylonians, Egyptians; caravan drivers, and attendants, with a stream of foreign travellers and visitors, must have been continually passing through the country.¹ Strings of camels and dromedaries from Midian and Ephah, Sheba and Seba; vast flocks from Kedar and Nebaioth, for the temple sacrifices; traders to the fairs of Palestine, with yarn and linen from Egypt; cloths and foreign goods, trinkets and jewellery from Tyre; were every-day sights. Every village and hamlet was now familiar with the travelling “merchant,” the pedlar of those days. But foreign intercourse brought foreign morals. The “strange” or foreign “woman” followed the “strange man,” and spread immorality to such an extent through the land

¹ Isa. lx. 6.

as to occasion the constant warnings of the Proverbs.¹ It was clear to all thoughtful minds that mere external glory had not fulfilled the ideal of Israel.

The outlook, indeed, was sad in the extreme. The conscription for military service might be borne; royal monopolies of trade were only what prevailed around; but that the free people of God should be sinking into the slaves of a despot—ground down by a “heavy yoke,” by “grievous service,” by “the chastisement of the taskmaster’s whip,” like the degraded peasants of Egypt;² that the abomination of the heathen should be publicly worshipped under the shadow of the temple, on altars built by Solomon, the anointed representative of Jehovah, the true king of Israel; that the floodgates of heathen immorality should be opened and the country filled with the impurity of the nations around, was not to be endured. Unfortunately, there seemed no alternative but revolution. It was soon to be shown that royal pride had risen above all considerations of prudence, and would grant no reforms—a result which the prophets seem instinctively to have foreseen. The old tribal jealousies, moreover, had been rekindled by the favour shown to Judah, and the burdens laid on Ephraim, always its haughty and fierce rival, but now justly incensed. The splendour and wealth of Jerusalem, its palaces, and, above all, its temple, awakened bitter feelings. Ephraim had at least an equal claim, she fancied, to the sunshine of the royal presence, and the temple was daily drawing to itself the veneration which had hitherto been associated

¹ Prov. v. 3–20; vi. 24–35; vii. 5–27; ix. 13–18. In chap. vii. 20, the husband is, strikingly, said to be a travelling merchant, who has “gone a long journey, and has taken the money bag with him, and will not come home till the full moon.”

² 1 Kings xii. 4, 7, 11, 14.

with the ancient holy places of the tribes. The change from Saul to David had formerly been of signal advantage; might not another be as great an advancement compared with Solomon? Terms might be dictated to a new king. He might be pledged to maintain the ancient liberties of the people, and to honour Jehovah alone; and the prophets might once more work with him in trying to realize the ideal of the theocracy.

Such must have been the train of thought in the mind of prophets and people as the reign of Solomon drew to a close. At last the erection of the heathen altars for his wives led to their open expression. Whether by a prophet or in a dream, it was announced to him that the kingdom would be rent from him and given to one of his servants; a single tribe—that of Judah—being alone left, not for his sake, but for that of David and of Jerusalem.¹ Nor was the successor thus designated long unknown. It was Jeroboam, the son of an Ephraimite of the name of Nebat, whom Jewish tradition identifies with the traitor Shimei. His mother is said to have been a woman of indifferent character,² early a widow, but supported afterwards by her son. His birthplace, Zereda, or Sarira, is identified by some with Zarthan or Zaretan, in the Ghor of the Jordan, near the mouth of the Jordan, where the brasses were cast for the temple. Active and of bright intelligence, he had been employed in some subordinate post in the new fortifications of Jerusalem, planned by Solomon in the beginning of his reign, and having attracted the notice of the king, was made superintendent of the taskwork exacted from the northern tribes.³ Thus brought into prominence, he seems to have

¹ 1 Kings xi. 11-13.

² *Sept. Vat. Text*; 1 Kings xii. 24. This may well have been an addition made by Jewish hatred.

³ 1 Kings xi. 24.

used his invidious office wisely and gently, raising no personal dislike, but making himself the champion of his tribesmen, though carrying out his duties thoroughly. Indeed, he was afterwards known as he who had "enclosed the city of David."¹ But a higher destiny was in store for him. As he was on his journey one day from Jerusalem to Ephraim, the prophet Ahijah, of Shiloh, suddenly stopped him; the two being alone in the open country. With the license of his order, the prophet caught hold of a new mantle worn by Jeroboam, and tore it into twelve pieces, giving him ten. Then followed the announcement of which this strange act was the symbol—that God had rent ten tribes from Solomon on account of his having favoured idolatry, and had chosen him, Jeroboam, as king over them. The hope in Ahijah's heart, in anticipation of such a revolution, shaped itself in his closing words. The throne of Jeroboam would be safe for his posterity if he, unlike Solomon, walked in the ways of God, did what was right in His sight, and kept His statutes and commandments as David had done.²

How long this happened before Solomon's death is not said, but it had, apparently, an immediate effect on Jeroboam. He seems to have set himself henceforth to prepare for his coming fortune. He even gradually, like Absalom, affected almost royal state, for we read of his maintaining in Ephraim no fewer than 300 chariots.³ But this, ere long, excited the suspicions of Solomon, and Jeroboam had, for the time, to flee. Hurrying therefore to Egypt, he found the same protection from Shishak, of the Assyrian dynasty, as Hadad of Edom in the past, and, like him, was honoured by having a princess given

¹ 1 Kings xii. 26. *Sept.*

² 1 Kings xi. 28-38.

³ 1 Kings xii. 25. *Sept.*

to him in marriage. As long as Solomon lived, he could not venture to return, but communications, eagerly maintained with his countrymen, prevented his being forgotten, and in due time he was to re-appear as the Nemesis of Solomon's guilt, by breaking up his kingdom.¹

¹ The extent of territory occupied by the Twelve Tribes at the death of Solomon is calculated by Kiepert as having been about 13,000 English square miles. This is exclusive of the Philistine territory, or of the subjugated regions outside. Of the 13,000, Israel occupied about 9,400, and Judah 3,600 square miles. The whole area of Palestine was thus nearly equal to that of the kingdom of Holland, or of the six northern counties of England. The kingdom of Judah was rather less than Northumberland, Durham, and Westmoreland; that of Israel was very nearly as large as Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cumberland.





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS AND THE SONG OF SONGS.

A BRIEF notice of the Book of Proverbs has already been given in the preceding pages, but it forms so characteristic a feature of Hebrew literature that a fuller reference to it seems demanded.

As it now stands, this collection of sententious utterances on all subjects embraced by the Jews under the name of Wisdom, appears to have been gradually formed in the three hundred years between Solomon and Hezekiah¹: a great part of it, but not the whole, being the composition of the wise king. Ewald's opinion is that the oldest section dates from about two centuries after Solomon, though still breathing the spirit of his age; that under Hezekiah a second part was formed, with much in it from Solomon's time; that the introduction followed a hundred years later; then some additions in the body of the Book, and finally the last two chapters immediately before the Exile.² Bertheau fancies that it was mainly collected under Hezekiah, though additions were subsequently made.³ Hitzig thinks the first chapters date almost from Solomon's time; that a second portion was added shortly

¹ Zöckler, *Die Sprüche Salomonis*, p. 22.

² *Poet. Bücher des A. T.*, vol. iv. pp. 2 ff.

³ *Kommentar*, Einl., pp. 23 ff.

before the time of Isaiah; a third immediately after the return of the Jews from Babylon, and other smaller sections still later.¹ Delitzsch and Bleek substantially agree in the opinion that the first and larger half of the collection is older than Hezekiah, while the second dates from the age of that monarch. The compiler of the first half, they think, lived in the reign of Jehoshaphat, about a hundred years after Solomon. The great source of the collection in its older parts was, they assume, the rich treasure of 3,000 proverbs composed by Solomon himself, which, in Jehoshaphat's day, must have been carefully preserved. With these, however, may well have been included the best utterances of men like the four sons of Mahol—Ethan, Heman, Chalcol and Darda—whose wisdom was only less famous than that of Solomon himself.² The first and larger half thus formed, constituted, it is thought, essentially, a Book of Youth; the second half, a Book for the People; a treasury of wisdom for kings and subjects; the body of which consisted of proverbs collected during the reign of Hezekiah. A few additions made at a later time completed the whole.³ Graetz holds that the collection now known as the Book of Proverbs was "not only compiled, but enriched, under Hezekiah."⁴

The Proverbs in their simplest shape are brief, and consist generally of two members, which illustrate and enforce the thought designed to be expressed, or present an instructive contrast. Of such sententious maxims there are more than five hundred, dating as we have seen from different times, but all alike in their style and character. Their usually studied language shows that they

¹ *Kommentar*, Einl., pp. 17 ff.

² 1 Kings iv. 31.

³ Delitzsch, *Sprüche Salomo's*, in *Herzog*, vol. xiv. pp. 707 ff.

⁴ *Gesch.*, vol. ii. p. 265. Bleek, Einl., pp. 634 ff.

were not proverbs in the ordinary sense,—mere thoughtful embodiments of popular wit or wisdom,—but the careful composition of men who set a value on beauty of style, and could employ it. Besides Solomon, the class known as *THE WISE* were, no doubt, chiefly their authors; men, who, like the Psalmists, belonged generally to the schools of the prophets, and sought, under Divine guidance, the religious instruction of the nation. Venerable members of these communities may well have proposed to instruct their “sons” or disciples, by such pithy and easily remembered sayings, how to look at life wisely and know its realities from different sides. Hence the Proverbs are often couched in the form of an address, in which even individuals are approached by the words “Hear, my son,” or “Hast thou seen?” By such vivid and simple means the *WISE* sought to impart to the young and old their own experiences of life. Hence the Proverbs form a mirror of moral precepts and reflections fitted to benefit all classes in every age.

“Many a one feigns ¹ himself rich and has nothing
Many a one feigns himself poor yet has great riches.”²

“A bribe seems a magician’s jewel to him who has it to give;
Which way soever he turns it, it seems to bring him good.”³

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
But a desire realized is a tree of life.”⁴

“Him who keeps back corn (till famine prices come) the people
curse,
But they pour blessings on the head of him that sells it.”⁵

The monarchy gave rise to many proverbs which are laudatory or the reverse according to the character of the king for the time being. A series which ascribe great

¹ *Ewald. Graetz. Delitzsch. Hitzig.*

² Prov. xiii. 7.

³ xvii. 8.

⁴ xiii. 12.

⁵ xi. 26.

importance to the ruler seem to date from the age of Solomon, in which the throne faithfully promoted justice and equity. Some have been given already¹ but the following are of the same class.

“The lips of the king are an oracle;
His mouth is unerring in its decisions.
A just weight and scales are (as it were) God’s;
Even the smallest stone weights are not beneath His regard.²
Righteous lips are the delight of kings,
They love them that speak the truth.
The wrath of the king is like the angel of death,
But a wise man knows how to appease it.
In the friendly looks of the king is life,
His favour is like the clouds of the latter rain.”³

Solomon was followed by kings many of whom were unworthy of their office; governed by caprice, and setting no bounds to their despotic temper. Such also have their niche in this temple of wisdom.

“The terror caused by a king is like the roaring of a lion;
To provoke him to anger is to throw away one’s life.”⁴

“Like a roaring lion and a bear ranging after its prey,
Is a wicked ruler over a poor people.”⁵

A series of Proverbs is devoted to the duties of woman. A wife in Israel held a high place compared with that of her sex in other Eastern nations. She was the helpmeet of her husband and the manager of all household affairs, reigning as a queen in her family. If worthless, she ruined her husband and brought disgrace and shame on

¹ Page 450.

² This seems the sense of the clause. *Hitzig*. Graetz reads “the king’s” for “God’s,” but on what authority I know not.

³ Prov. xvi. 10–15. The *Sept.* have the sing. “king’s” for the plur. “kings,” in ver. 12, 13.

⁴ xx. 2. See xix. 12.

⁵ xxviii. 15.

her children. The Book of Proverbs assumes that a man has only one wife, and praises or condemns her, according to her deserts.

"An honest woman is a crown to her husband
A worthless wife is as rottenness to his bones"¹

"The wisdom of a woman builds up her house;
But folly in her pulls it down with her own hands."²

"A virtuous woman obtains honour,
The diligent obtain riches."³

"Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers;
But a prudent wife is the gift of God."⁴

"He who finds a good wife has found a blessing
And obtained a sign of favour from God."⁵

"The beauty of a woman who has not sense
Is like a ring of gold in the snout of a swine."⁶

"Better to live on the parapet of the roof (exposed to all weathers,
Than with a brawling woman in a wide house."⁷

"Better to dwell in the wilderness
Than to have the vexation of a brawling woman."⁸

"A continual dropping (through the soaked earthen roof) in a
time of hard rain,
And a quarrelsome woman, are alike:
He who tries to hold her in holds in the wind,
Or tries to take up oil with his fingers."⁹

The authors of the Proverbs, however, as was befitting, lay especial stress on a religious and moral life, the ideal of which is pure and lofty in the extreme. Their allusions to God, especially, are among the sublimest in the whole Scriptures.

¹ Prov. xii. 4.

² xiv. 1.

³ xi. 16. For "strong" read "diligent." *Sept. Hitzig. Graetz.*

⁴ xix. 14.

⁵ xviii. 22. *Hitzig.*

⁶ ii. 22.

⁷ xxi. 9.

⁸ xxi. 19.

⁹ xxvii. 15, 16. *Hitzig.*

"The eyes of Jehovah are in every place,
Beholding the evil and the good."¹

"The underworld, and the kingdoms of the dead, are bare before
Jehovah:

How much more, then, the hearts of the children of men."²

"Every man thinks his own life right,
But Jehovah is the weigher of spirits."³ (He puts them into
His balances.)

"A man's heart devises his way,
But Jehovah directs his steps."⁴

"By love and truth (towards God) sins are atoned for;⁵
By the fear of God we may shun evil."⁶

"To do justice and right
Is more pleasing to Jehovah than sacrifice."⁷

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to Jehovah,
But the prayer of the upright is his delight."⁸

"The way of the wicked is an abomination to Jehovah,
But He loveth him that striveth after righteousness."⁹

"A false balance is an abomination to Jehovah,
But a full weight is His delight."

Double weights and double measures,
Both, alike, are hated of God.¹⁰

"Who can say 'I have made my heart clean,'
I am pure from my sins?"¹¹

In such sentences one seems to read the utterances of
the prophets. So true is it that the same Divine spirit
pervades all Scripture!

The Proverbs bearing on the right conduct of life are
especially numerous, and form a body of pure wisdom

¹ Prov. xv. 3. ² iii. 11. ³ xvi. 2; xxi. 2. ⁴ xvi. 9.

⁵ Hitzig. Graetz. Schmoller. ⁶ xvi. 6. See Isai. xxvii. 9.

⁷ Prov. xxi. 3. ⁸ xv. 8. ⁹ xv. 9.

¹⁰ xi. 1; xx. 10. See Deut. xxv. 13. ¹¹ Prov. xx. 9.

which may in vain be sought for elsewhere in any other literature. The fundamental thought of all is that "He who walketh uprightly walketh surely."¹ On this basis rest all the counsels given for the guidance of our life and the restraint of our impulses and passions.

"He that is slow to anger is the greatest of heroes,
And he that rules his own temper
Is greater than he who conquers a city."²

"The wisdom of a man makes him slow to anger;
His glory is to pass by a fault."³

"A man who does not control his own temper
Is like a city with its walls broken down."⁴

"Better is a little with righteousness,
Than great revenues without right."⁵

"Better a dry morsel and peace,
Than a house full of choice flesh of offerings, with strife."⁶

Activity, diligence and industry were especially commended, and idleness bitterly reproved.

"He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread;
He has no understanding who runs after idle trifles."⁷

"Wealth gained quickly soon passes;
But he that gathers little by little, by honest work, shall increase."⁸

"One who is slothful in his work
Is brother to him that is a great waster (destroyer)."⁹

"Though the slothful have his hand in the dish (of food),
He is too lazy to lift it to his mouth."¹⁰

¹ Prov. x. 9.

² xix. 11.

³ xvi. 8; xv. 16.

⁷ xii. 11; xxviii. 19.

⁹ xviii. 9.

² xvi. 32.

⁴ xxv. 28.

⁶ xvii. 1. *Hitzig.* xv. 17.

⁸ xiii. 11; xx. 21.

¹⁰ xix. 24; xxvi. 15.

"The sluggard who will not plough for the cold;
Will beg in the harvest—in vain."¹

"I went by the field of the slothful,
By the vineyard of a man without understanding,
And lo! it was all overgrown with nettles,
Thorns covered the face of it;
The stone wall round it was broken down.
When I saw it, I considered it well,
I looked at it, and took warning for myself!
'A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep.'
So comes thy poverty stealing softly on thee like a robber;
Thy want like an armed man!"²

The twenty-fifth chapter consists of "Proverbs of Solomon," which, we are told, "the men of Hezekiah copied out." These nameless benefactors of mankind were, as the *Septuagint* tells us, the counsellors of the king, and are mentioned only in this place. They must have been learned men, skilled in literary composition, for the honour of collecting the scattered proverbs of Solomon would be given to none but persons of the highest culture and erudite skill. If Hitzig be right in thinking that verbal peculiarities show many of the sayings thus collected to bear marks of the dialect of the northern kingdom,³ it throws an interesting light on the mode in which they were brought together. Hitzig fancies that the "men of Hezekiah" received a commission from the king, after the catastrophe of the Ten Tribes, to travel over the former home of the exiles and collect from the few people still left the remains of the

¹ Prov. xx. 13; xxvi. 13.

² xxiv. 30-34. Graetz translates: "Thy poverty meets thee like a king's messenger of death: thy want like a man with a shield."

³ Hitzig, p. 302.

culture and wisdom of their departed brethen, yet to be found; the proverbs still on the lips of the survivors, and the literary memorials cherished in their homes. Graetz fancies chapter twenty-five to be a collection of sentences specially intended to guide those round the throne in their duties towards the king and to each other; that they might neither, on the one hand, be too ready to accuse imaginary treachery, or too backward in their zeal to defend the throne. "One of the WISE MEN in the court," says he, "appears to have put the counsels in the form of proverbs, to point out the narrow line between too much zeal and too little. There should always be an opportunity for warning the king of what was wrong, but accusations on hearsay should be avoided; and, above all, no one should be too troublesome." ¹

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing;
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.
As the heavens are too high and the earth too deep for our comprehension,
The heart of the king is beyond our finding out."

"As, when the dross is purged from the silver,
The refiner is able to prepare a fair vessel;
So, when the wicked are removed from before the king
His throne is established in righteousness."

"Thrust not thyself too much forward in the presence of the king,
And take not the place of the Great;
For it is better that it be said to thee, 'Come up here,'
Than that thou be humbled before the king whom thine eyes
have seen." ²

¹ *Gesch.*, vol. ii. p. 271.

² "Whom thine eyes have seen." Graetz translates these words: "What thine eyes have seen—speak out." Luke xiv. 8, 9, 10.

"Be not hasty to make an accusation,
Lest you know not what to do in the end,
When your neighbour has put you to shame."¹

"Make good your own complaint against your neighbour,
But do not betray the secret of another,
Lest some hearer accuse you of doing so,
And shame be fastened on you for ever."

"Like golden apples chased² on a silver ground,
So is a word aptly spoken."

"A wise reprover of one who has a listening ear,
Is like a golden nose-ring and costly adornment."

"As a draught cooled with snow in the fierce heat of harvest
So is a faithful messenger to his senders;
For he refresheth the soul of his masters."

"Like clouds and wind without rain
Is he who boasts of gifts which he never bestows."³

"Patience convinces a prince in the end,
And the soft tongue breaks bones."

"If you have found honey, eat only moderately,
Lest you sicken yourself and vomit it all;
And so, set your foot seldom in your neighbour's house,
Lest he weary of thee and hate thee."

"A false witness against his neighbour
Is a club, a sword, and a pointed arrow."

"Confidence in a faithless man in the day of need
Is like trust in a loose tooth or in a sprained foot."

¹ Schmoller, Bertheau and Graetz, translate it: "Go not out (to the street) to mix hastily in strife, that you may not be excited to do something you will regret, in the end, when your opponent has treated you roughly."

² "Chased," etc. Gesenius, Ewald and Delitzsch, translate "in silver baskets."

³ Bertheau.

"He who sings songs to a heavy heart
Is like one who takes away a man's garment in cold weather,
Or like vinegar on a raw wound."¹

"If your enemy be hungry, give him bread;
If he be thirsty, give him water;
For thus you heap glowing coals on his head,²
And Jehovah will reward you."

It is difficult to say when the last of the Proverbs in the canonical book were composed, for we know nothing whatever of Agur and king Lemuel, whose names are prefixed to the last two chapters respectively.

As an illustration of the interpretation of the Song of Songs by recent scholars it may be interesting to quote that of Graetz, a Jewish writer of the highest merit, though not free from a rationalistic tendency.

In contrast with the impure love of the heathen world, says he, the author created as an ideal being—a fair shepherdess—Sulamith, the daughter of Aminadab. She has a deep, heartfelt, inextinguishable love for a shepherd who feeds his flocks among "the lilies." Yet she remains modest and chaste. Her beauty is heightened by her natural and acquired gifts. She has a charming voice; a sweet enchaining eloquence; and her every movement in the dance shows grace and attractiveness. She loves her shepherd with the whole glow of a youthful heart, and is so mastered by her affection that she tells us—

¹ Graetz.

² You shame him to the uttermost, so that he glows with the sense of his wrong-doing, and can no longer refuse to honour your forbearing love. See Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. Matt. v. 44. Rom. xii. 20.

“ Love is strong as death,
 Ardent love is mighty as the grave;
 Its darts are darts of fire; a flame from Jehovah;
 Many waters cannot quench love;
 Floods cannot wash it away.
 If one were to give all he had for love,
 He would be utterly contemned.”¹

This glowing love protects her from every immodest act, unworthy word, or impure thought. As her eyes are like the eyes of doves, her heart is like the dove's in innocence:

“ There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,
 With damsels beyond number;
 But my love, my pure one, stands alone—
 The one child of her mother,
 The beloved of her that bare her!
 The maidens saw her and praised her,
 Queens and concubines joined to laud her;
 ‘ Who is she, who looks out like the red of morning?
 Fair as the moon, bright as the sun
 Spreading awe like an army with banners.’ ”²

Her friend—so she always calls him—testifies to her stainless purity—

“ Honey sweetness drops from thy lips,
 My sister-bride!
 Honey and milk are on thy tongue,
 The smell of thy robes is like that of Lebanon.
 A fenced garden is my sister-bride
 A fenced well, a sealed up spring! ”³

In her chaste modesty Sulamith will not sing before strange ears, but she does so, willingly, to please her Love, and tells her maiden friends, the daughters of Jerusalem, that she has done so.

¹ Cant. viii. 6, 7.

² vi. 8, 10.

³ iv. 11, 12.

"My beloved spake, and said to me,
 'Up, up, my friend, my fair one, and come forth;
 For, see, the winter is past,
 The rainy months are over and gone,
 The flowers show on the earth,
 The time of singing is come,
 The voice of the wandering turtle dove is already heard in our
 land,
 The fig-tree has already given flavour to its young fruit,
 And the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance.
 Up! up! my friend, my fair one, come forth!
 My Dove in the clefts of the rock!
 In the secret place of the steep hills!
 Let me see thy form,
 Let me hear thy voice,
 For thy voice is sweet
 And thy form is fair.'"¹

In answer to this tender invitation, Sulamith sings to him a brief song on shepherd life. But when he tries to induce her to sing before strangers—

"Thou that lingerest in the gardens;
 Companions listen for thy voice;
 Let us now hear it"²—

she declines to grant his request;

"Flee away, my beloved!
 Be like the gazelle, or a young hart,
 On the mountains of spices!"³

And, thus, as often as her friend asks her anything she thinks unbecoming, she turns aside his wish—

"Before the day blows cold
 And the shadows bend down,
 Take thyself away, my beloved,
 And be like the roe or the young gazelle,
 On the cloven mountains!"⁴

¹ Cant. ii. 10-14.

² viii. 13.

³ viii. 14.

⁴ ii. 17.

When pressed by strangers to let them see her dance—

“Come back, come back, O Sulamith!
That we may gaze at thee,
How fair are thy shod feet, O daughter of Aminadab,
The movements of thy limbs like those of golden chains
The work of a cunning workman”—

she answers with warmth:—

“Why would you wish to look at Sulamith
As if she were a dancer of the public choirs?”¹

This reply is all they receive from the chaste maiden.
To her beloved she says—

“Would that thou wert my brother
Who drew milk from my mother’s breast!
If I found thee on the street and kissed thee,
They could not then give me blame!
I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother’s house,
Into the chamber of her that bare me;
I would give thee to drink of spiced wine,
I would refresh thee with pomegranate juice!”²

Such is the ideal maiden whom the author of the Song of Songs, sets before his countrymen as the pattern of her sex. He makes her appeal to the daughters of Jerusalem,—

“I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes and the gazelles of the field,
That you stir not up, nor excite (unhealthy) love
Before (true) love rises, of itself, unbidden.”³

Thus, the poet reproves, with the tenderest imagery, the special evils of his day—the artificial sensual love bought by gold and willing to be so—the unchasteness of female dancers and singers, and the countless others of their sex who were far from pure—the life of towns,

¹ Cant. vi. 13.

² viii. 1, 2.

³ ii. 7.

with its effeminacy—the degrading and dishonouring pleasures of the table and of the drinking feast. He lifts a warning voice against the moral corruption which had already affected even the daughters of Jerusalem.¹

Such is Graetz's conception of the Song of Songs, which in the main is that of most recent critics, including even the strictly evangelical. Whether, however, he put the right construction on details, is a question no one can decide, for no two translators understand them alike.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

	B.C.
Abraham's visit to Egypt	c. 2120
Joseph in Egypt	c. 1912
Moses	c. 1582
Exodus	c. 1502
Conquest of Canaan	c. 1460
Othniel	c. 1420
Ehud	c. 1385
Jair	c. 1345
Deborah	c. 1305
Gideon	c. 1265
Jephthah	c. 1185
Eli	c. 1145
SAMUEL	c. 1105
SAUL	c. 1085
DAVID.	1066-1025

Contemporaries of David.

Phœnicia :—Hiram I. Ahibal. Hiram II.

Edom :—Hadad.

SOLOMON	1025-985
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Contemporaries of Solomon.

Phœnicia :—Hiram II.

Edom :—Hadad.

Damascus :—Rezin.

¹ Graetz, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. pp. 257-261

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(THE CHURCH OF THE ENGLISH EMBASSY),

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PREFACE.

HAVING now, after nearly three years work, reached the close of the fourth volume of these Hours with the Bible, I beg to thank the public very sincerely for the favour with which they have been pleased to receive my effort to set before them "The Scriptures, in the light of Modern Discovery and Knowledge." Should my life be continued till the whole undertaking is finished, they may depend on no labour being spared to make it, throughout, as thorough and reliable as I possibly can.

In the present volume, as in the last, the opportunity has been taken, where it offered, of calling attention to the references in the later Books of Scripture, to the earlier. The publication of Dr. Robertson Smith's book, "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," and the stir its wild and startling assertions have caused, make this especially desirable, for such incidental contradictions to his extreme views are of great weight. It was, of course, inevitable, that a controversy respecting the origin and structure of the Pentateuch should one day rise; but that it should have been opened by a gentleman of such ultra opinions as Dr. Smith, is a misfortune. Nor is it

less to be regretted that in mooted theories so unwelcome to the mass of his countrymen, by whom the beliefs he impugns have been regarded as sacred, he should not have shown more of the humility and diffidence becoming under such circumstances. To brand the clergy and educated laity of the three kingdoms, his own followers excepted, as "traditionalists;" to arrogate to himself the glory of a scientific religionist, and to despise every one else as the reverse; to tell all who do not agree with him that they "show the usual presumption of unhistorical rationalism," is neither wise nor decorous. But years and wider study will teach Dr. Smith to be less confident and contemptuous. We must submit to it at present as only pretty Fanny's way, and wait till it pass.

That various documents have been incorporated in the Books known as the Pentateuch is not matter of question. Every one grants it. Nor is it necessary to assume that Moses was the author of the five Books as a whole. The portions *said* to have been written by him may, indeed, be all that he himself, with his own hand, set down. But that Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, except a few fragments, date from nearly a thousand years after Moses; that the story of the Tabernacle, of the institution of the great yearly feasts, of the Levitical economy, and indeed, even the laws which governed the Jewish people, are all "legal fictions," invented as long after the dates they affect to bear as the interval from this present year to the reign of king Alfred in Wessex, are rather strong assertions at the very opening of a controversy.

Dr. Smith, of course, has no doubt that he is right.

He tells us repeatedly that "there is no doubt," that "it is quite certain," that "the plain fact is," that "the conclusion is inevitable," when he gives forth an opinion. No faintest perfume of modesty flavours his superciliousness. His Sir Oracle tone never leaves him. The world must accept him as a Daniel come to judgment. No dog of a "traditionalist" must bark when he opes his mouth.

It is nevertheless beyond question that his theory of the origin of the middle books of the Pentateuch after the Exile, is rejected by all but the Jacobins of Biblical criticism. He has simply adopted the teaching of the school of Kuenen and Wellhausen, who in this follow Graf, George, and Vatke. There is no tincture of originality in any single page of his book. He forgets to tell the audiences who listened to his lectures that his theory as to Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, was opposed to those of De Wette, Ewald, Von Lengerke, Knobel, Bleek, Dillmann, Riehm, Kleinert, and others, compared with whom Kuenen and Wellhausen are very minute authorities indeed.

It is impossible in a preface to discuss points on which so much has been written as the sources of the Pentateuch. An extract from Bleek may, however, show that Dr. Smith is very far from stating what is "certain" or "beyond doubt." "Although the Pentateuch," says Bleek, "in its present state and extent may not have been composed by Moses, and also many of the single laws in it may be the product of a later age, still, the legislation contained in it is generally Mosaic in its entire spirit and character, and this applies, not only to the part which

relates to the general moral commands, such as the Decalogue, but also to what refers to the Levitical laws of purifying, which constitute so important a part of it. The art of authorship must have been actually in use among the people of Israel in the Mosaic age; since, if this were not the case, such laws could hardly have been recorded in such detailed completeness at that time. In the Pentateuch (at least as regards these three middle books), we stand principally on *historic* ground. In these laws, the very external circumstances of the people of Israel are clearly presupposed as the historical part of the Pentateuch presents them to us, and they thus serve to attest generally the historical character of the book.”¹

The dogmatic confidence with which Dr. Smith rests great conclusions on fanciful grounds might be illustrated in many instances. Let one suffice. The word Matzaibah occurs in the Old Testament in two senses: the one that of a simple memorial stone; the other, that of a sun-pillar, or pillar used in connection with the worship of the Sun. The usage is, indeed, much the same as in such words as “relic” and “image” among ourselves. Each has a common and also a religious meaning.

A Matzaibah of the former kind was set up by Jacob as a witness to the covenant made by God with him at Bethel, and a memorial of it.² A second was a witness to his covenant made with Laban.³ A third raised by him at Bethel on his return to Canaan, to attest the

¹ Bleek, *Intro. to Old Test.*, vol. i. p. 221, Eng. Trans. See also *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1831, pp. 488-524.

² Gen. xxviii. 18, 22; xxxi. 13.

³ Gen. xxxi. 45, 51, 52.

second covenant made by God with him.¹ A fourth was set up by him as a tombstone over Rachel's grave.² Moses raised twelve of these memorial stones when the tribes accepted the covenant made with them by God; as evidence of their having done so.³ And in the same way, Isaiah says that, when Egypt turns to Jehovah, a Matzaibah will be erected at its border, to Jehovah, "and it shall be *for a sign and a witness* unto Jehovah of Hosts in the Land of Egypt,⁴—that is, a witness between Him and His people of their covenant relations.

The other use of the word is invariably in connection with Sun worship, the idolatry of Canaan and other countries. Thus in Exodus xxiii. 24, the "Matzaiboth"⁵ of the Canaanites are to be "broken down, *and their gods utterly overthrown.*" In Exodus xxxiv. 13, the foul Asherahs of Sun worship are similarly classed along with them. In Leviticus xxvi. 1 it is forbidden to make *such* a Matzaibah, thus flagrantly associated with idolatry. So in Deuteronomy vii. 5, xii. 3; 1 Kings xiv. 23; 2 Kings iii. 2. In this last passage they are taken out of the House of Baal by Jehu and burned. So, 2 Kings xvii. 10. The Hebrews had adopted heathenism and its Matzaiboth, and hence these were thus constantly denounced. Hezekiah, indeed, broke them down where they stood, beside the Asherahs and Bamoth, or heathen high places.⁶ The very people united with him in doing so.⁷ Asa, also, had previously done the same.⁸

¹ Gen. xxxv. 14.² Gen. xxxv. 20.³ Exod xxiv. 4, 7.⁴ Isaiah xix. 19.⁵ Plural of Matzaibah.⁶ 2 Kings xviii. 4.⁷ 2 Chron. xxxi. 1.⁸ 2 Chron. xiv. 3.

That these Matzaiboth were idolatrous sun-pillars—or perhaps pyramidal stones—is thus sufficiently clear, but Jeremiah puts it beyond question by using this word for the obelisks before the great Sun temple at On, in Egypt.¹ Only one more instance of its use occurs in the Old Testament, where Ezekiel applies it to the symbols of Baal in the temples of Tyre.²

Now for Dr. Smith's deduction from the second meaning of the word. He assumes that Jacob set up an *idolatrous sun-pillar*, and founds on this the assertion that such a symbol of Baal and of the foul Asherah, the emblem of lust and impurity, "had been used by the patriarchs, and continued to exist in sanctuaries of Jehovah down to the eighth century."³ He complacently adds, "This detail is one of the clearest proofs that Deuteronomy was unknown till long after the days of Moses"! The whole book is, I regret to say, neither better nor worse than this sample.

Dr. Smith's book, as a specimen of hasty and superficial criticism is hardly, however, the most discouraging sign of the unhealthy spirit of destructiveness abroad. In the new volume of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," Dr. Wellhausen, of all men, has been intrusted with the article on Israel. Abraham or Isaac are not even named in it, and the story of Moses is diminished to a thread. He does not mention Joseph. In fact the Bible is a mere trickle of history through a meadow of fable! As to the Pentateuch, he of course gives forth, with in-

¹ Jer. xliii. 13.

² Ezek. xxvi. 11, (*Smend*).

³ Pages 353, 226.

vincible assurance, the views which Dr. Robertson Smith has already copied from him as his own staple.

Thorough, reverent discussion is not only commendable but imperative. But that two or three would-be prophets should stalk about in their sheepskins over the land, proclaiming themselves the depositaries of all knowledge respecting the Bible, and branding all others as ignorant and owl-eyed, is intolerable. Yet the evil will work its own cure. Articles like those of Dr. Wellhausen will keep many an old fashioned household from letting the "Encyclopædia Britannica" enter it, and books like that of Dr. Robertson Smith will bring out their antidote in sober and reverent criticism, worthy of general respect.

122, CHEYNE WALK, CHELSEA,

April 6th, 1882.

NOTE TO PAGE 384.

In Isaiah xxix. 1, 2, "Ariel" is translated by Knobel and Delitzsch—from Htzig, who, however seems latterly to have changed his opinion—by "the Hearth of God." An Arabic root is the justification of this rendering. Gesenius, Von Ewald, Drechsler, Cheyne, and others translate it, as in the text, "Lion" or "Lioness of God."

P.S.—As a sample of torturing well known words into fanciful meanings, to suit a theory, a sentence or two on Dr. Smith's achievements in this way may be of interest.

The Hebrew word for Priest is Cohain. It is found also in the Chaldee, Syriac, Ethiopic and Arabic, in the same sense. But among the pagan Arabs it meant, besides, a diviner, or soothsayer, from the fact that in very remote times the functions of a soothsayer and priest were usually joined. Other meanings

occur in the use of the word in the cognate languages—for example, in Syriac it means a rich man—but all these senses are in the opinion of Gesenius only secondary, and spring from the primary one of a *priest's* station or power. The original force of the word is still unknown. Hitzig derives it from the verb “to stand”—Cohain thus meaning “one who stands by”—“an assistant.” Maurer thinks it comes from the verb for “to bow”—as is done in worship.¹ But Dr. Smith rushes in where so much more learned men fear to tread, and at once decides, or rather insinuates that the Old Testament priests were virtually soothsayers, “chiefly distinguished by their qualification to give an oracle.”² This extraordinary freak of interpretation has for its object the trying to make it be believed that the true office of a priest was of a very late date. He has even the courage to assert, in support of this fancy, that “the popular religion of Israel was closely modelled on the forms of Semitic heathenism”!!

The way in which the word Torah—“the” or “a law” is put on the rack, is almost more extraordinary. It comes from the verb “to teach,” from which also the word Moreh, “teaching” or “a teacher” is derived. Now it so happens that in Genesis xii. 6 the plain, or rather, oak of Moreh, near Shechem,³ is mentioned. This is always understood to mean the oak or oaks belonging to the Canaanite Moreh, as in the case of the “oaks of Mamre,”⁴ a citizen of Hebron. But this will not do for Dr. Smith. Contrary to all authority, he tells us that Moreh “may mean ■ soothsayer,” and hints that this throws light on the word Torah. He christens the oak of Moreh, therefore, “the Torah-giver’s oak,” and then gravely adds that it “is identical with the soothsayer’s oak,” Judges ix. 37. The only shadow of a ground for this flourish is Jacob’s being stated, in Genesis xxxv. 4, to have buried the strange gods and earrings of his household “under the oak which was *in* or *close to* Shechem.”⁵ But the oak of the Meonenim,⁶ or “soothsayers,” as Dr. Smith translates it, was at a distance from Shechem, for the ambush of Abimelech is seen from afar, from the gate of the town, coming along the road leading from the oak to Shechem. Nor is this all. The word Meonenim does not mean “enchantments” or “sorceries,” but “enchanters” or “sorcerers,” and though the jewels buried might have been the former, they certainly were not the latter.

Ges., *Thesaurus*, p. 662.

² Page 285.

³ In Deut. xi. 30, “the oaks of Moreh” are mentioned. In Judges vii. 1, “the hill of the Teacher” (Moreh) occurs. Moreh also means “the archer,” “the early rain,” which, as well as teaching, come from the idea of “shoot-
ing out,” “sprinkling.”

⁴ Gen. xiii. 18.

⁵ See Ges., *Lex.*, p. 791, on the prep. “in.”

⁶ The word Meonenim means dealers in secret magic arts, sorcerers, idolatrous diviners.

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HOURS WITH THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

JEROBOAM I., B.C. 985-963.

NADAB, „ 963-961.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

REHOBOAM, B.C. 985-968.

ABIJAH, „ 968-965.

REHOBOAM, apparently the only son of Solomon, ascended the throne, on his father's death, amidst a general calm, and seemingly universal acquiescence. He was already 41 years of age, but had had the misfortune of being born in the purple, and of having grown up amidst the despotic and unpopular influences of a splendid and selfish court. If, moreover, he boasted Solomon for a father, his mother was a princess of Ammon, and, as such, an idolatress.¹ With a touch here and there of his father's shrewdness, he had inherited little of his other endowments, as often happens with the sons of great men. Short-sighted and haughty, as a rule, he was also deficient in the self-reliance so essential to an absolute king, and showed neither warlike capacity nor

¹ She was a daughter of Hanun, king of Ammon. 2 Sam. x. 1, compared with *Sept.* 1 Kings xii. 24.

spirit. In the circumstances amidst which his reign began, he was quite unfit to pilot the State through the dangers that threatened it. Incapable of realizing that any existed, he drove it on the rocks and wrecked it for ever.

David had received the homage of all the tribes while yet at Hebron, before the taking of Jerusalem, and Solomon had in the same way been publicly accepted as king before his father's death, on occasion of his enthronement in presence of the representatives of the nation.¹ More than a year,² however, seems to have elapsed after Rehoboam's accession before he took any steps in this direction, and it may be that even then, action was initiated by the tribes rather than by him. He seems, indeed, to have assumed that the throne was his right by succession, apart from any popular ratification of his claims, and to have acted with the same high-handed Orientalism as his father; as if the people were made to obey and he born to rule them as he chose.

National assemblies had in earlier times been held on all great public occasions, but latterly they had been confined to the accession of a king. Such a parliament of the ten northern tribes was now convened, presumably by the elders of each; not, however, at Jerusalem, as might have been expected, but in their own territory, at Shechem.³ Rehoboam must come to them, not they to him. This itself was ominous, but he lived as yet in a fool's paradise, blind and deaf to what would have

¹ 1 Chron. xxviii. 1. 1 Kings i. 40, 45, 46.

² 1 Kings xii. 26. *Sept., Vat.*

³ Shechem, long the centre of Israelitish life in Palestine under Abraham and Jacob, retained for ages traces of its ancient dignity, as Rheims, the old capital of France, continued to be the scene of coronations long after Paris had taken its place as the national capital.

arrested the deepest attention of a sensible ruler. Meanwhile there was no overt hint of disloyal intentions; they desired only some reforms which, as free men, they had a right to claim. Yet they based their demand for these on a ground unpalatable in the extreme to a king. Their obedience to him, they said, in effect, was conditional; it was free to them to serve him or not, as they chose; if he confirmed their old constitutional liberties, they would accept him; if not, they would withdraw from allegiance. He had fancied the spirit of the people so tamed and broken, that such language and bearing, where he had looked for trembling servility, only infuriated him and roused his arbitrary self-will. "Thy father," said the elders through whom they addressed him, "oppressed us with his exactions and with the huge cost of his royal establishments.¹ Make this grievous service² and heavy yoke lighter, and we will serve thee."

Not unnaturally, three days' delay were demanded by Rehoboam before he gave his answer. However willing to make a just concession, his dignity required him to do it as became a king. Had he been equal to the occasion, the future of Israel might have been different. But a revolution was inevitable. "The king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord."³ Instinctively turning to the venerable men who had stood before his father, men thoughtful and experienced, they gave him advice which, had it been taken, might have averted the catastrophe. Gentle words, they said, and

¹ *Sept.*, "Made the meats of his table grievous to us." 1 Kings xii. 24.

² The Hebrew word used here is translated elsewhere "bondage," "servitude," "servile work." Exod. vi. 6. Num. xxviii. 18. Neh. v. 18. Isa. xiv. 3. 2 Chron. x. 4, etc.

³ 1 Kings xii. 15.

timely concessions, would bind the tribes to him for ever. But it is hard for a despot to humble himself. Was there no way of meeting the difficulty more flattering to his pride? A younger generation of courtiers had grown up around him; he would ask them. In their light insolence, however, they had no idea but coercion. Who were they who dared oppose the will of a king? Rehoboam should treat them as slaves, and tell them that, instead of lessening their burdens, he would increase them. His little finger should be thicker than his father's loins; instead of using common whips on them, like Solomon's taskmasters, he should see that they were driven to their work with knotted scourges! ¹

It was enough! There was a leader among the tribes who knew how to profit by the emergency. Jeroboam had returned from Egypt to Palestine, on hearing of the death of Solomon, and was present at Shechem, as the chief spokesman for the assembly. The year since the great king's death had no doubt been diligently used by him in secret preparation for the crisis that had now arrived. The word of Ahijah the prophet, assuring him of the throne of the Ten Tribes, had not been forgotten, nor had any step been neglected to secure its fulfilment. The third day brought the haughty and insolent answer he had no doubt expected. Forthwith the matter was decided. The terrible cry was instantly heard which, in David's time, under Sheba,² had already well-nigh anticipated the secession now to be carried out.

“What portion have we in David?

What inheritance in Jesse's son?

¹ 1 Kings xii. 11. Scorpions. The Romans called a whip tipped with sharp points of metal, a scorpion.

² 2 Sam. xx. 2.

To your tents, O Israel!¹

Now take care of your own house, O David!"

The work of two generations was undone in a moment! Loyal to David himself, the tribes at large had been alienated by the gross tyranny and selfish extravagance of Solomon's reign; the immunities granted to Judah had rekindled old jealousies, and a fierce passion for liberty had been roused, before which resistance was vain. Rehoboam, appalled, hardly knew what to do. Trying concession when too late, he sent the aged Adoniram to them to propose reforms. But he could not have chosen a worse representative than one who had been chief task-master in the odious past. A shower of stones greeted his appearance, and in a few moments he lay dying. His fate was a protest that they had struck for freedom, and that their slavery was ended. Terrified for his own life, the king hastily mounted his chariot and fled to Jerusalem, never to see Shechem again. The assembled tribes forthwith elected Jeroboam as king.

For the moment it must have seemed as if the House of David had lost everything. The sceptre left it was that only of a single tribe, with insignificant dependencies. From almost within sight of Jerusalem on the north, to the valley of the Orontes; from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, all else had passed into the hands of one whom Solomon had first raised from obscurity. Judah, Rehoboam's own tribe, on its barren hills, alone remained faithful to him. The boundaries of the tribes generally

¹ This reference to tents ages after the nation had abandoned nomadic life, points it may be to the continuance among them to a large extent of the custom of living in tents in the hot summer, as is still largely done even by townspeople in Palestine. The tradition of their early tent life in the wilderness would be thus kept up. See *Land and Book*, p. 296.

had, in the course of ages, become more or less changed. Jerusalem stood on the territory of Benjamin, and its population belonged in great measure to that tribe.¹ The southern part of it, therefore, adhered to Judah, as far as Mizpeh and Geba;² but the northern half, including the ancient and revered sanctuaries of Bethel, Ramah, Gilgal, and Jericho, remained, as heretofore, connected with the fortunes of Ephraim.³ Judah had already absorbed some part of Dan, for the villages of Zorah and Ajalon were reckoned hers,⁴ and thus a fragment of the territory of that tribe also, remained under Rehoboam. But the town of Dan in the far north was the capital of the tribe, and most of the clan would doubtless follow it in its adhesion to the northern confederacy. Simeon had never had any prominence in the nation, for its district lay in the thirsty Negeb, far below Hebron: a region of poor upland pastures, which had condemned it to the shepherd life of early ages. This tribe had tried to develop town life with its higher civilization, but even in the time of David had begun to abandon it again for the tent.⁵ Hence it naturally continued the connection with Judah, to which it had to look for protection from its powerful neighbours on all sides, and in which it was virtually lost.

¹ 1 Kings xii. 20. The *Sept.* adds, "and the tribe of Benjamin." That the Jerusalem population were mostly Benjamites follows from Jer. vi. 1. In Ezek. xxxvii. 16, by "the children of Israel" are meant Benjamites. As a tribe Benjamin was included in the northern kingdom under Ishbosheth (2 Sam. ii. 9), and it was no less so after that kingdom had fallen (Ps. lxxx. 2). The bitterest enemies of the house of David—Saul, Shimei and Sheba—were Benjamites. Yet part of the tribe clung to Rehoboam, apparently those in and round Jerusalem, as stated in the text. See 1 Kings xii. 21.

² 1 Kings xv. 22.

⁴ 2 Chron. xi. 10.

³ 1 Kings xii. 29; xv. 17; xvi. 34.

⁵ 1 Chron. iv. 31.

While the territory of Rehoboam could thus take the name of only one tribe, the northern confederacy, on the other hand, might well assume the proud title of "Israel," the father of the whole race, and boast that it was, in effect, the national kingdom. The claim was indeed virtually acknowledged by the general use of this lordly name henceforth. It was not applied to Judah till after the destruction of Samaria;¹ but from the first, even the prophets thus designated the northern kingdom. In later times, indeed, when idolatry had spread, they began to speak of Israel as Ephraim,² but rather from growing contempt for its apostasy than in denial of its rank, for, to the last, it is also spoken of as Jacob, Isaac, and Joseph.³ Its establishment is at all times recognised by them as part of the Divine economy, and its vicissitudes and revolutions, no less than the fortunes of Judah, are traced to the immediate control of Providence. Within its borders, with the exception of Jerusalem and Hebron, were all the sites dear to a Hebrew, east and west of the Jordan. A prophet had virtually inaugurated it, by Ahijah's designation of Jeroboam as its first king, and it became the special sphere of the activity of the order for centuries after its formal commencement. For though Judah, at least after Elijah and Elisha, had more prophets who are individually noticed in Scripture, it was in Israel only, so far as we know, that they were counted by 50, 100, or 400 at a time.⁴

The hope of the prophets that the reforms, so urgently demanded in the interests of religion and popular liberty,

¹ Zech. xii. 1.

² See Hos. and Zech, *passim*. Ps. lxxviii. 9. Isa. vii. 2; xi. 13; xxviii. 1, 3.

³ Amos iii. 13; vi. 8; vii. 2, 5, 9, 16. Hos. xii. 2. Amos vi. 6.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 13; xxii. 6. 2 Kings ii. 3, 5; iv. 38; i. 1; ix. 1.

would be secured by the establishment of the northern kingdom, was doomed to disappointment. The limitation of the power of the throne within the ancient theocratic bounds had been expected; but instead of this, the monarchy soon became more arbitrary than before the secession. Having no adventitious support from the splendour of their own deeds or character; no borrowed lustre from a historical past; divorced from the people by their despotic rather than popular tendencies; placed, moreover, between Judah, hostile, on the south, and Syria on the north, the kings of Israel created a military monarchy; at once to repress revolution within, and guard the frontier from external attack. From the first, the soldier was the great power in the State; the chief of the army being even more powerful than in the undivided kingdom, when Joab could brave the anger of David himself. He stood next after the king, and was the recognised channel of royal favour.¹ In two cases, his great office enabled him to seize the throne itself.² There was no longer a pretence of relying, as of old, on infantry alone. Chariot squadrons and cavalry were now the main trust.³ Instead of the 600 braves of David, a favoured regiment of chariots was in immediate attendance on the king,⁴ each carrying a shield bearer, a driver, and the warrior himself.⁵ A body guard protected the palace and the royal person, at once securing the safety of the king and serving as his couriers and executioners.⁶ The special national weapon, however, was the bow,⁷ which was as famous in Israel as it used to be in

¹ 2 Kings iv. 13. ² 1 Kings xvi. 16. 2 Kings ix. 5.

³ 1 Kings xvi. 9. ⁴ Roskoff, art. *Kriegsherr*, Schenkel's *Lex.*

⁵ The Shalishim, or "three," translated "captains."

⁶ 2 Kings x. 25; ix. 25. ⁷ Ps. lxxviii. 9. 2 Kings ix. 24; xiii. 15, 16.

mediæval England, though the Hebrew archers differed from ours, by fighting from chariots as well as on foot.

The toleration of heathenism by Solomon had given great offence, and doubtless facilitated the secession. It was, in fact, the ground on which Ahijah had announced to Jeroboam that the rupture of the monarchy had been decreed by God.¹ Yet the kings of Israel, so far from adopting a policy of exclusiveness in favour of the old religion, not only tampered with it from the first, but maintained no precautions against the entrance of idolatry, and in not a few cases actively favoured it. The prophets, instead of being invited to counsel the throne, as Nathan and Gad had been, by David, were ignored or violently resisted. Unrestrained by the checks still felt in Judah, the kings made no pretence of acting under the laws of the theocracy, but were guided solely by their own ideas of policy. The conflict which Samuel had maintained with Saul was recommenced, therefore, almost at once, between his successors and the kings of Israel, constant revolutions being the result. Nor did it ever cease. For more than 250 years before the fall of the kingdom, there was a life and death struggle between the throne and the prophets, who, having, under God, founded the monarchy, fought nobly to guide it in the right path. Dynasties rose and fell at short intervals; most of them in the second generation; only one surviving till the fifth. The succession became, in fact, elective rather than hereditary, with all the evils of that system. Denunciation by a prophet was fatal to a royal house; another rose at his word, in its place. But, in spite of this, things drifted, ever, from bad to worse.

Shut out from the culture and spiritual elevation, slowly attained in the south, under Samuel, David, and

¹ 1 Kings xi. 33.

Solomon, the new kingdom suffered greatly from the loss of such healthful and ennobling influences. Soon after its erection, moreover, it received a heavy blow in the withdrawal of the priests and Levites to Jerusalem. To them in great measure was confined the education and refinement of the community. They were the representatives of art, law, religion, and general knowledge. The institution of the calf worship of Bethel and Dan, instead of the homage to the Unseen which obtained in Jerusalem, was a fatal error; induced partly by jealousy of the South, partly by unworthy concession to the popular tastes. The nation not only lost the elevating and strengthening influences of a spiritual faith, but was henceforth unable to resist the advance of heathenism, far less to overcome it. Having sanctioned it in a measure, nothing could prevent it flooding in ever more strongly from Phenicia and Syria, with which the whole country was in the closest intercourse, through commerce and otherwise. The confusion of the old days of the Judges returned in a great degree by constant political revolutions; popular ignorance and superstition grew apace where all was unsettled; idolatry gradually took deep and wide root, and with it an immorality fatal to any people. Great prophets rose, and able kings, but they could not stay the downward progress of the nation, and it had at last to be left, by its best citizens, to sink into the ruin they could not avert.

The earlier history of the southern kingdom was very different. Small and weak, with all the evil tendencies which had led to the great secession, it yet retained not a few advantages secured under David and Solomon. The very traditions of these reigns was a priceless treasure. The kingdom was virtually a continuation of the glorious past, based on the same fundamental principles. The king ruled, not under, but with the prophets and

people, maintaining his dignity, but respecting public opinion and prophetic counsel; following, in fact, while appearing to lead; as in healthy governments in all ages. The splendour of the first two reigns, moreover, had surrounded the throne with a halo that kept the nation loyal to the line of David for 500 years. During that long period the succession was undisputed, and the dynasty was at last overthrown only by foreign invasion. The ideal of kingly excellence in the inspired writings of David and Solomon, and the grand loyalty of the former to his obligations as the ruler of a theocracy, were a standard for their posterity; restraining the weak or unworthy, and guiding the reforms and action of the true-hearted. The golden age, when David reigned and Nathan and Gad stood at his side, rose abidingly before the imagination of future kings and generations. Hence public affairs were much more settled and peaceful than in the northern kingdom. Troubles might rise, but they did not shake the throne. In spite of its weakness, Judah could sustain itself a hundred years after its more powerful rival had fallen.

The secret of this tenacious national life was its comparative purity. Heathenism was kept far longer at bay than in Israel, and when at any time it threatened to root itself in the land, it was cast out by an earnest and vigorous reaction. The idolatry introduced by Solomon was banished after a few decades; and when, at a later date, under Athaliah and Ahaz, it was once more thrust on the people, they united against it, with a new king at their head, and triumphantly restored the hereditary worship of Jehovah. The fatal strife between prophets and kings was thus avoided. Freer to utter their warnings and counsels than in Israel, these fearless witnesses for God kept alive the old faith, and with it the spiritual

life of the nation. Nor did their work end with their life. How much does mankind owe to their inspired utterances preserved in the canon of Scripture !

Yet heathenism pressed ever closer. Its rigid exclusion, however essential, was in the end impossible. Contact with idolatrous nations ; the presence of an active pro-heathen party, dating from the fatal error of Solomon ; the influence, too often, of a pro-heathen king and court ; the tendency of baser natures to turn to any sensuous worship, beat back the ancient faith from its old supremacy, and slowly sapped its vigour. The increasing influence of Assyria and Babylon, as time passed on, strengthened this heathen element, till it became dominant. Alliances with idolatrous empires, and imitation of their example, at once threw the ancient faith into the shade, and showed in the decay of national worth their appropriate fruits. Even what orthodoxy survived was blighted. Under a cold and worldly priesthood favoured by the court, a superstitious ceremonial and dead ecclesiasticism gradually threw the people into spiritual sleep, in spite of the watchful and earnest care of the prophets and of the remnant of noble souls.¹

Meanwhile the throne became steadily more unlike the grand ancient ideal, and the contrast helped to undermine it. A mad determination to throw itself into the high politics of the day, and take part in the conflicts of mighty empires, completed its ruin. With it sank all that survived of the purer elements of national life. But the work of the prophets was seen in the clinging vitality with which these emerged from the catastrophe, while still in exile, making a return from Babylon possible, and securing the resurrection of Judaism, free from every trace of heathen influence.

¹ Isa. i. 13 ff. Jer. vii. Amos v. 21.

Jeroboam might well be proud of his kingdom when elected to it by the national assembly at Shechem. Instead of the stony hills of Judea, he had for his realm the fertile valleys and wooded heights of Central Palestine, the great plain of Esdraelon, the rich highland district of Upper Galilee, the forests and meadows of Gilead and Bashan, and the wide pastoral uplands of Gad and Reuben. If the southern part of the Philistine plain and the mountains of Edom, with their facilities for commerce from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, remained under Rehoboam, his rival could boast of receiving tribute from half of Philistia and the rich countries of Ammon and Moab. Syria, as far as the Euphrates, formerly part of Solomon's empire, was already virtually independent. A portion of it, indeed, forming the kingdom of Damascus, had already, as we have seen, given Solomon trouble, under Rezon or Hezion, an officer of the defeated king of Zobah, and was destined, under Tabrimmon,¹ his grandson, and its future kings, to be a hereditary and deadly enemy of Israel for centuries. Gradually conquering the other Aramaic lands on this side of the Euphrates, it could at last, in the reign of Ahab, assemble thirty-two vassal princes to fight under its standard against him.² Hence Rehoboam seems to have maintained friendly relations with it,³ to embarrass Jeroboam; but the astute northern ruler more than compensated himself for this stroke of policy by securing the active support of his father-in-law, the king of Egypt, against the southern kingdom.

The first impulse of Rehoboam had been to try to win

¹ 1 Kings xv. 18 = "Rimmon" (or "Rammon," the Assyrian), "is good." "Sun god, the judge of heaven and earth," etc. (*Black obelisk of Shalmaneser.*)

² 1 Kings xx. 1.

³ Graetz.

back the ten tribes by force of arms, and for this purpose he called out the whole levy of his kingdom, amounting to 180,000 men; but the project was laid aside in obedience to a Divine warning given through the prophet Shemaiah.¹ It was impossible, however, to prevent border feuds and petty warfare, which lasted throughout his whole reign, and that of his son.² Dissuaded from aggressive hostilities on a great scale, and dreading attacks from Jeroboam's Egyptian ally, or from the Philistines, who might now trouble him in his weakness, he resolved to protect the approaches to Jerusalem by a series of fifteen forts on the south, south-west, and west. Bethlehem and Tekoa, 5 miles south of it; Etham, 7 miles to the south-east of it, near Solomon's famous gardens; Socho, 18 miles south-west of the capital; Adullam, 5 miles nearer it; Bethzur, 17 miles from it, on the Hebron road; Gath, in the Philistine plains, 7 miles west of Socho; Maresha, among the hills, 6 miles south-east of Gath; Ziph, 4 miles south of Hebron, and Hebron itself; Adoraim, 5 miles west of Hebron; Lachish, 9 miles west of Adoraim, were all made defensible, evidently in anticipation of an attack from Egypt; while Azekah, Zorah, and Ajalon, at the head of the passes from the maritime plains, in the west, were likewise stockaded. The whole were, moreover, provisioned and garrisoned. The king took also the prudent step of withdrawing a number of his sons, of whom he had twenty-eight, from the temptations of idle life at Jerusalem, and setting them over these strong posts;³ Abijah, the son of his favourite wife, Maachah, a daughter of his uncle Absalom, being at the same time raised to the oversight of the

¹ 1 Kings xii. 21-24.

² 1 Kings xiv. 30; xv. 6, 7.

³ 2 Chron. xi. 5, 23. The distances in the text are from Kiepert's *Map*.

whole royal family. The fatal error of polygamy still, however, clung to the shrunken monarchy, for not only had Rehoboam himself eighteen wives and sixty concubines, but a harem was created for each of his sons.¹

Meanwhile, Jeroboam made Shechem his capital, and fortified it strongly, in keeping with his character as a great builder. No spot could have been more delightful for a royal residence, and it was, besides, not only the chief town of Ephraim, but the most ancient sanctuary of Israel in Palestine. Abraham himself had raised an altar in its valley; Jacob had bought land and dug his famous well in it; it contained Joseph's grave; and Joshua had caused the blessings and curses of the Law to be read from Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, on its northern and southern sides. But the Shechemites, from Jacob's day, had borne a doubtful name. They had long ago crowned Abimelech, and then turned against him; and now, it would seem, after hailing Jeroboam as their king, they early gave him trouble. Leaving a spot so unquiet, therefore, he first crossed to Penuel,² near the Jabbok, beyond Jordan,—another ancient sanctuary of the race, famous in the history of Jacob,—and made it a second capital; perhaps to keep his hold on Moab and Ammon. But he soon forsook this also for Tirzah,³ apparently the present village Teiasar, charmingly seated among the rich green hills, six miles east of Samaria. The height on which it stood he, at once, strongly fortified, and built a city, with a royal palace and other buildings and mansions, on so grand a scale, that the splendour of the whole vied with that of Jerusalem.⁴ There had been an old Canaanite town on the hill, but

¹ 2 Chron. xi. 18-23. ² Gen. xxxii. 30. ³ 1 Kings xv. 33.

"Beautiful as Tirzah," Cant. vi. 4. Jerusalem is spoken of as also beautiful, but only after Tirzah.

it had fallen in Joshua's invasion,¹ and is not mentioned again till Jeroboam made it his capital. This honour it retained through the remainder of his reign, and under Baasha, Elah, and Zimri; only losing it on Omri's founding Samaria. Jeroboam was buried at Tirzah, and so probably were the next three kings.

The separation of Israel from Judah had at first been merely political; the religious unity of the nation was as yet unbroken. But in this, as it seemed to Jeroboam, lay serious risk to himself and his house. The priests and Levites throughout his dominions would doubtless, as a rule, be loyal to their ecclesiastical centre in the south, and might thus exert a very dangerous influence. Indeed, the popularity of Jerusalem with the better class of the nation, was already a sign of their deep disappointment with the new kingdom, which had proved so doubtful an exchange for that which they had forsaken.² The people, moreover, still regarded the temple as their national sanctuary, and flocked to it in great numbers at the yearly festivals, and they might, through this, be turned again, after a time, to the House of David. The only remedy, as it seemed to Jeroboam, was to establish local religious centres in his own territories, as in the time of the Judges, and this he proceeded to do at once. The nation in those wild bygone days had worshipped Jehovah under external symbols, and would doubtless do so again. He had been accustomed, besides, to the worship of the sacred ox Apis, or the calf Mnevis, in Egypt, and his queen was an Egyptian. Still more; over all Western Asia, including the heathen parts of Palestine, the ox was the favourite symbol of Baal, and as such Israel was already accustomed to it. He caused two golden calves, or young oxen, therefore,

¹ Josh. xii. 24.

² 1 Kings xii. 26. 2 Chron. xi. 16.

to be set up at the north and south of the land, proclaiming them to be emblems of Jehovah. It was a repetition of the apostasy of the golden calf at Sinai. The idea, in fact, was evidently taken from that fatal incident, for the same words were used in the inauguration of the worship: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."¹ The sites selected for the new worship were wisely chosen: Bethel, an ancient sanctuary, hallowed by memories of Abraham and Jacob; and Dan, on the north, the seat of a local worship, at least from the days of Micah. Indeed, both places had apparently been regarded as sacred by the Canaanites from the remote past. This striking religious reaction proved successful in the highest degree, for all Israel, "as one man,"² resorted to Bethel and Dan. Naturally, however, it was abhorrent to the priests and Levites scattered through Israel; nor would they have anything to do with it. Leaving their pasture grounds and their homes in the various Levitical cities, they streamed over the southern border, strengthening the kingdom of Judah and weakening its rival.³ To supply their places, men from all classes⁴ were consecrated to the sacred

¹ Exod. xxxii. 4. As the symbol of the god who had brought them out of Egypt, the calf could not have represented Apis or Mnevis, Egyptian gods. As such, these would have kept the Israelites from escaping; for Egyptian gods, of course, would act for Egypt, not against it. It must, therefore, have represented the Asiatic ox-headed god, which would naturally injure Egypt, and help Israel, an Asiatic people.

² 1 Kings xii. 30. *Ewald's translation*, vol. iii. p. 472.

³ They were not allowed, it is said, to "execute the priest's office to Jehovah;" but this must mean, to execute it in the only lawful way, without an image. Otherwise they might have continued at Bethel and Dan. 2 Chron. xi. 14.

⁴ 1 Kings xii. 31. "Of the lowest" = "of all classes."

offices. But the golden calves were only a part of the new system. Worship on "high places" had for ages been universal in Western Asia. On the Euphrates lofty towers had been erected, that altars might be raised on their summits, and many of the hills of Palestine had in the same way been consecrated to religious worship. The universal worship of the sun had, doubtless, as has been already said, led to this custom, such spots as were most exposed to his rays being selected for religious uses. From the nations around, the practice had passed to the Hebrews, and had become so cherished and dear to them by the usage of centuries, that it survived the building of the temple, and was nominally abolished only by the vigorous action of Josiah, just before the downfall of Judah. Altars were raised alongside the calves at Bethel and Dan. With that of Bethel was connected a new temple, known for centuries as the royal and national sanctuary, a rival of the great temple of Jerusalem; with a distinct priesthood, ritual and festivals, and all the pomp of the religious centre of the kingdom.¹ Thence-

¹ Amos vii. 13. *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 473. There was a double motive in Jeroboam's selection of Bethel. It lay on a hill which formed a natural border fortress, defended by the gorge of the Wady Suweinit—the pass from Jericho—on the south. Luz, a Canaanite town on the same height, had, at the conquest, repelled the invaders on their first attack, and only yielded afterwards to the combined force of Benjamin and Ephraim (Judges i. 22–25). It was also a very sacred place in the eyes of the whole nation. The Beth-el, or House of God, erected on it by Jacob, was probably some rude cromlech or altar of unhewn stones, but it was the primitive sanctuary of the race, after Shechem. Jeroboam's new temple would, we may well imagine, exhibit some of the splendour of the temples of Egypt with which he was familiar. It had, we know, "a high priest," and the "noise of songs" and "the melody of viols," and "burnt offerings and meat offerings," and "feast days" and "solemn assemblies." It was known,

forward, public prayer was to be made and sacrifices and burning of incense offered there rather than at Jerusalem. Nor was this all. Eager to seduce the people from Judah and win them to the new system, he pandered with an utter unscrupulousness to their worst superstitions, and erected altars to the demons of the desert, which had always been an object of popular terror.¹ The first step of introducing the calves had opened the way to an indefinite progress towards heathenism. Ere long even Asherahs were tolerated in Israel.²

The inauguration of the new religion, we may readily believe, was made a great state ceremonial, like the bringing of the Sacred Ark by David to Jerusalem, or the dedication of the temple by Solomon. It was determined also to establish a great religious feast as a counter-attraction to that of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, but held a month later; the first celebration being appointed for the time of the opening ceremonies. Henceforth, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, instead of the fifteenth day of the seventh month, was to be the great Harvest Home of Israel. As to the Passover and Pentecost, celebrating the Exodus and the wheat harvest, moreover, as "the king's sanctuary"* and "the king's house" stood near it (Amos vii. 13).

¹ "Devils." 2 Chron. xi. 15; in Isa. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14, translated "satyrs." The word comes from the verb "to fear," "to dread." In all Western Asia it was thought that hairy demons, like a goat, haunted lonely places, to spring out on unwary travelers. Lenormant, *La Magique*, p. 29. See also *Annals of Assurbanipal*. Smith and Lenormant. Rich, quoted by Gesenius, *Iesaia*, p. 466, says: "I find the belief in such demons common among the ruins of Babylon." Indeed, among what people, ancient or modern, is there not more or less superstitious fear connected with lonely desolation, especially by night?

² 1 Kings xiv. 15.

* Royal temple. Pusey. National temple. Kuenen.

they were from this time to fall into disuse; but the Passover, at least, never did so, and proved a strong link in after times between the North and South, in spite of Jeroboam's astuteness. As yet, however, notwithstanding the introduction of the symbolism of the calves, the worship of Jehovah was apparently much more strict in Israel than under the loose sanction of heathenism by Rehoboam in Judah. There was, nevertheless, a greater danger of future idolatry. The calf worship mixed a gross element, capable of indefinite abuse, with the spiritual ideas of the old faith, whereas the very foulness of heathenism in Judah secured its future expulsion, by the contrast it offered to the temple worship. Symbolism was a direct step towards idolatry, and thus prepared the way for its full introduction, and the ruin of the nation.

Naturally, therefore, the first momentous step, so pregnant with future evil, at once roused the zeal of the prophets. They rightly saw in it a surrender of that spiritual conception of God which had been slowly built up in the popular mind from the days of Samuel. Their sorrow and anger were the keener, from their having favoured the rending of the kingdom, in the hope of restoring religion to a higher position than it had latterly held under Solomon. As Jeroboam proceeded, moreover, in his course, with increasing recklessness, their opposition became stronger, till open resistance broke out between them and the king, to be continued henceforth, under his successors, while the monarchy survived.

On the set day, Jeroboam, usurping the function of high priest, had approached the altar on the hill of Bethel, to inaugurate the new worship by burning incense, when suddenly an unknown prophet from Judah appeared, denouncing the innovations, and predicting the birth of a prince of the line of David, who would offer

on the altar thus set up, the bones of the priests who had ministered before it. As a sign that he spoke with Divine authority, the altar was rent in two at his word, and the ashes of the sacrifices scattered. Furious at the interruption, and especially at its tenor, Jeroboam would fain have seized the daring intruder; but his arm, we are told, was withered as he sought to lay hold on him, and was only healed at the prophet's intercession. Disappearing as suddenly as he came, after refusing the king's hospitality, as that offered by an idolater in a polluted land, the messenger, in his own fate illustrated the terrible exactness of obedience demanded by Divine commands. Persuaded against his better judgment, by one who certainly meant him no harm, but failed to realize the obligation imposed on him, he unthinkingly disobeyed in an apparently innocent particular, the directions given him, and perished as the result of his waywardness. He had brought on himself the curse denounced against the country at large for its apostasy.¹ An incident so sad lingered long in the popular memory. By those loyal to Jehovah, the altar was deemed permanently accursed. It had been rent in two on the day of its inauguration; it was again torn asunder by an earthquake in the days of Amos, nearly 200 years later;² and at last, when the northern kingdom had fallen, Josiah, after burning the high place and a lewd Asherah image near at hand, overthrew the whole structure; grinding its very stones to dust, and burning on them, as the uttermost defilement, the bones of the priests, once its ministers, but long ago laid to rest in the rock-hewn graves of the valley beneath.³ The spot where the prophet—perhaps Iddo—met his death, was also kept in popular remembrance,

¹ 1 Kings xiii. 1-32.

² Amos ix. 1.

³ 2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16.

for even in Josiah's day his tombstone was yet pointed out.¹

Such an outrage on the sacred theocratic constitution, under which alone Jeroboam held his throne, was a virtual defiance of the prophets, its faithful representatives, and at once roused their fiercest denunciations. Few incidents are recorded; nor do we know the steps of the high controversy, which speedily ended in the final and complete rupture between the king and "the men



A VEILED WOMAN.

of God." But one which happened after the capital had been removed to Tirzah, illustrates the relations that soon prevailed between them. Abijah, the heir to the kingdom, had fallen sick amidst the vines and olive gardens, and umbrageous "paradises" of the new royal abode. Tenderly fond of him,

Jeroboam yearned to know whether he would recover, and determined to apply to the prophet Ahijah, at Shiloh, who had first told him he should be king. His wife, the Egyptian princess, with a mother's eagerness, resolved to be the messenger; but knowing how matters stood between Ahijah and her husband, she thought it best to disguise herself before setting out. Taking with her, therefore, as the customary present on con-

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 17, 18.

sulting the prophet, only a simple gift becoming a poor woman, of ten loaves, some buns,¹ or raisin cakes, and a jar of dibs, she set out for Shiloh, about eighteen miles south from Tirzah, over the hills. But Ahijah, now old and blind, had been divinely warned beforehand of her approach, and greeted her at once, on her entrance, as the wife of Jeroboam. Then followed an interview sad in the extreme. Her visit, he told her, was useless, and her gift could not be accepted. He would have nothing to do with her husband, but stood aloof from him, as one who had violated the condition on which he had been raised to the throne. Instead of doing only what was right in the eyes of Jehovah, he had exceeded all before him in wickedness, by worshipping the invisible God under the symbol of an ox that eateth grass.² The royal house was irrevocably doomed. Every male belonging to it should die. The boy for whom she inquired so earnestly would alone escape the calamities of his family, by dying before they came. He would pass away as she re-entered Tirzah. "All Israel, however, would mourn for him; for he only of Jeroboam would come to the grave, because in him alone there was found some good thing towards Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam."³

Meanwhile Rehoboam, in the southern kingdom, apparently sobered by his misfortunes, had for three years⁴ acted loyally as a theocratic king. But it is hard to turn out of a false course. Trained by an idolatrous mother, the master of a harem which perhaps included heathen princesses, and inheriting the results of the introduction

¹ The *Sept.* adds, "for the children." 1 Kings xiv. 3.

² Ps. cvi. 20.

³ 1 Kings xiv. 13.

⁴ 2 Chron. xi. 17.

of idolatry into Jerusalem by his father, he soon gave himself up to it, and broke away from the old religion.¹ Additional high places for idols were built; symbolic pillars were raised to Baal, and Asherahs to the lewd goddess of fertility, "on every high hill and under every green tree." Heathenism in its worst characteristics was let loose on the land. Male and female temple-prostitutes were tolerated, to swell the revenues of the idol priests.² But Providence had its terrible retribution in store. Stirred up, doubtless, as already said, by his son-in-law, Jeroboam—Shishak, or Sesonchis, one of the kings of Egypt of the intruding Assyrian dynasty,³ invaded Judah in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 cavalry, and a huge army of Libyans, Ethiopian cave-men,⁴ and Nubians, and easily breaking through the circle of outlying posts, appeared under the walls of Jerusalem, which only escaped formal surrender by submitting to the most humiliating conditions. The vast wealth of gifts stored in the temple, the famous gold shields taken from Syria by David, those made by Solomon for his body guard, and all the treasures of the king's palace, were exacted by the invader as the ransom of the city, and Rehoboam was virtually reduced to the position of a vassal of Egypt.⁵ So hopelessly had the division of the kingdom destroyed the glory of the days of Solomon. Israel was once more threatened with an Egyptian bondage.

An interesting memorial of this great disaster may still be seen on the walls of a small temple built by Rameses

¹ 2 Chron. xii. 1, 14.

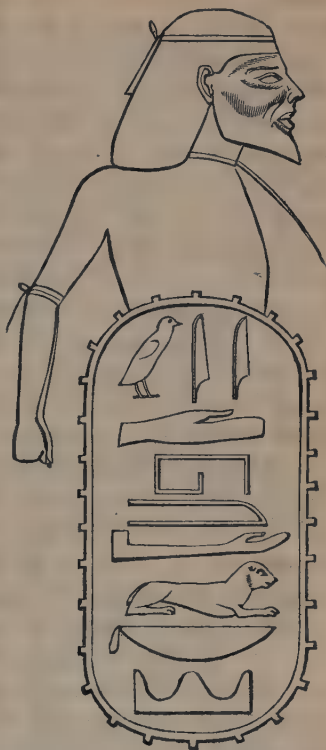
² 1 Kings xiv. 22-24.

³ *Brugsch*, vol. ii. pp. 198-212.

⁴ *Mühlau und Volck*, on word Sukkiim.

⁵ 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26. 2 Chron. xii. 2-9. From ver. 8 it follows that Judea henceforth, for a time at least, paid tribute to Egypt.

III., on the south side of the great temple of Karnac, at Thebes. The smaller building was finished by Shishak himself, after his victory over Rehoboam. Its walls are covered inside and out with sculptures, amongst which occurs the only direct and indisputable reference to Jewish history found on the monuments of Egypt. In one part the king, drawn on a gigantic scale, stands holding in his hands a train of prisoners, while the god Amon comes to meet him with another file of captives led by cords tied round their necks, the ends held in his hand. The figures, eleven in number, are of half length, terminating in shields, on which are painted the names of the cities taken from Judah. It was formerly thought that one of these figures bore the name of the Jewish king himself, but the inscriptions on all prove to be only a list of captured towns, some of them those which Rehoboam had so carefully fortified.¹



COMMEMORATION OF THE CONQUEST OF "THE ROYAL CITY OF JUDAH," THAT IS JERUSALEM, BY SHISHAK. From the Portico at Karnac.

Canon Rawlinson thinks the profile is that of Rehoboam himself. *Bib. Educator*, vol. i. p. 106.

¹ Some of the towns on the list are, naturally, in Judah, but

A pompous hieroglyphic inscription proclaims the praise of Amon for having subdued the nations of the south



PRISONERS LED OFF BY AN EGYPTIAN ARMY.

and north before him, so that their kings had cast themselves on the earth at his feet. The marriage of Solomon with the Egyptian princess had been of no avail to secure lasting peace with the Pharaohs. The very palace he had built for her in Jerusalem was now plundered, five years after his death, by an Egyptian king, her relation.

The greatness of Israel had thus faded like a short-

several are in the territory of the Ten Tribes, which Shishak might have been expected to spare, since Jeroboam was his ally and friend. But these towns prove to have been either Levitical or Canaanite, and it would seem from this that Jeroboam did not get quiet possession of all his future kingdom. The Levites appear to have held to Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 13), and the remnant of the Canaanites probably made a last struggle for independence.

Against these two classes of towns, therefore, in Northern

Israel, Shishak directed his arms, handing them over to Jeroboam when he had taken them. Rawlinson's *Hist. Illust. of Scrip.*, p. 109.

lived dream. The Philistines and Edomites doubtless took advantage of Rehoboam's weakness to regain their independence. Hadad of Idumea, no less than Jeroboam, was supported by Shishak. But with the loss of Edom the rich sea-trade to Ophir was at once closed, for there was no longer access to the port at Ezion-geber. The greatest source of revenue was thus cut off. Nor was the situation more cheering in other directions. The trade in horses and chariots carried on between Egypt and the Euphrates could not be continued; the revolt of the ten tribes and the independence of Damascus, having closed the caravan routes to the north. The poverty of the land, as compared with its wealth under Solomon, was unconsciously proclaimed by Rehoboam himself. The golden shields of his guard having gone to enrich the Pharaoh, he had to content himself with others of brass,¹ which, in his



PRISONERS LED OFF BY AN EGYPTIAN ARMY.

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 27.

vanity, were borne before him by his guards, as if things were unchanged from his father's days.¹

Seventeen years of this tinsel sovereignty passed away, before Rehoboam, at the age of fifty-eight, found a dignified rest in the royal tomb in the City of David, beside his great ancestors.² But his death brought no advantage to Judah. His successor, Abijah, was the son of Absalom's daughter, Maachah, Rehoboam's favourite wife.³ More warlike than his father, he took up the feud between North and South, and kindled it into new fierceness by a bloody war, to the grievous injury of both kingdoms. What could be hoped for the nation if its two sections, by weakening each other, made both an easy prey to the common enemies round? Abijah's short reign of three years was spent in a bitter struggle with Jeroboam, resulting in the capture of Bethel, and the two small towns of Jeshanah and Ephraim, or Ophra, in its vicinity. Had he at once destroyed the calf temple at the former, some good might have followed. As it was, Bethel before long fell again into the hands of Israel. There was, indeed, a momentary flicker of brighter light in the position of Judah, but it was only passing. All the elements of decay were still at work. Abijah formed an alliance with Damascus to paralyse Jeroboam by threatening his rear; but to seek the help of a State which had lately been a vassal of Solomon was itself a profound humiliation. Such a power, moreover, was naturally the common enemy of both Judah and Israel, equally ready to help either, with the sole aim of weakening the other, and thus in the end overpowering both. The evils of polygamy in the palace still continued, for Abijah had fourteen wives and thirty-eight sons and daughters.⁴

¹ *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 53.

² 1 Kings xiv. 31.

³ 1 Kings xv. 1-8.

⁴ 2 Chron. xiii. 21.

Nor was there any repression of the heathen abuses¹ introduced by Solomon, and increased under Rehoboam. The worst evils threatened the nation through the weakness and guilt of their princes. The mass of the people might as yet be loyal to Jehovah,² thanks to the lingering influence of David,³ but the poison was slowly working which would in the end ruin all.

Abijah was succeeded by his son, or as some think it should be, his brother, Asa,⁴ who proved a much worthier king. Jeroboam had still two years to live, but had been weakened by Abijah, and was not in a condition to trouble Judah any longer. Nothing is told us respecting his death, except that he was buried honourably in the royal sepulchre, doubtless at Tirzah. But

"The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones."

His strong character determined the whole future of Israel. He had made it a military monarchy, and such it continued. For political ends he had reintroduced the use of symbols into the worship of Jehovah, and thus entered on a course which ended in the formal establishment of heathenism by Omri and Ahab. However little, therefore, he may have intended to promote idolatry, the terrible indictment was rightly associated thenceforth for ever with his name, of having caused Israel to sin.

The instability and hollowness of Jeroboam's position was seen at once on his death. His firm hand had been

¹ 1 Kings xv. 3. ² 2 Chron. xii. 12. ³ 1 Kings xv. 4.

⁴ In 2 Chron. xv. 16, Maachah, the mother of Abijah, is said to have been the mother of Asa also. Graetz thinks it should be "brother;" others, that for "mother" we should read "grand-mother." Yet Maachah is said to have been "queen mother," that is, reigning mother of the king, under Asa, and this she could not have been as his grandmother. His own mother would in that case have been named.

able to suppress all open disaffection while he lived, but he had sown the wind, and his son Nadab reaped the whirlwind. Chagrin at the sinking glory of the nation, intensified by the victory of Judah in late years; the necessity of relying on the army, in a kingdom which had no prescription from the past; the difficulty of acting where the situation was in all respects so new, had doubtless disquieted the whole life of Jeroboam. Upheld by the soldiery, the throne was necessarily at its mercy, and this was felt in the camp. The king for the hour, was, in fact, only the elected of the troops, like the Roman emperors in the worst times. The people had no longer any political rights. Two years sufficed to bring all these seething elements of revolt to a head. Nadab had undertaken the siege of the Levitical town of Gibbethon, west of Tibneh, on the hills above the Philistine plain, in a line with Jerusalem, and things had not apparently prospered under him. This was enough. Discontent in the camp found expression in a successful military conspiracy headed by Baasha, a man of Issachar, one of Nadab's officers, who, after murdering him, ascended his throne. The curse pronounced on the house of Jeroboam by Ahijah of Shiloh now, at last, fell on it suddenly. To secure his position, Baasha, like Oriental kings generally, ordered the execution of every male of the fallen dynasty, and they were exterminated forthwith; some in Tirzah, where they were left lying in their blood in the streets, for the town dogs to eat; some in the country, where they were allowed in uttermost ignominy to remain unburied, the foul vultures gorging themselves on their corpses.¹ So perished the house of Jeroboam after a tenure of the throne for twenty-four years.

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 11.



CHAPTER II.

ASA, JEHOSEPHAT, AND THE HOUSE OF OMRI.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

BAASHA,	B.C. 961-937.
ELAH,	„ 937-935.
ZIMRI	(seven days).

KINGS OF JUDAH.

ASA,	B.C. 965-917.
JEHOSEPHAT,	„ 917-893.

Civil war between

<i>Tibni and OMRI,</i>	„ 935-931.
OMRI,	„ 931-919.
AHAB,	„ 919-897.

ASA had been two years on the throne of Judah; Rehoboam had been dead for five years, and his son Abijah for two, when the conspiracy of Baasha swept away the house of Jeroboam, and the new dynasty seated itself in Tirzah. But the revolution had been the work of the army alone, without any action on the part of the people, and hence had no bearing, or very little, on the social prosperity of the country. The sunny hills of Israel still dropped sweet wine; the ploughman overtook the reaper, and the treading of the grapes was swiftly followed by the sowing of new harvests;¹ for the richness of the land had not as yet been neutralized by the degeneracy of the nation. What policy the adventurer who had grasped supreme power would adopt, was, however, all-important. Unfortunately for both

¹ Amos ix. 13.

North and South, the dream of Israel since the secession had been to conquer Judah and restore the ancient kingdom of Saul, as Ishbosheth had tried to do. For this, Shishak had been stirred up against Rehoboam, during whose reign much blood had flowed on both sides. Jeroboam, while pursuing the same dream, had closed his life in the shame of inglorious defeat at the hands of Abijah. Nadab's offence was his having failed to restore the honour of the army. Baasha had only one course open to him; to lead the soldiery, his masters, to victory. Hence the long fratricidal war against Judah was continued, either in petty border feuds or in great campaigns, during his whole reign of twenty-four years;¹ making, in all, nearly fifty years of hostilities since the separation of the kingdoms.

One incident only of this fatal strife is recorded. Egypt threatened once more to invade the southern kingdom, perhaps at the instigation of Baasha, who, at the same time organized a grand invasion from the north. The only known result of this, however, was the capture of Ramah,² on the military and caravan road, six miles north of Jerusalem. This post he fortified strongly, to blockade Jerusalem, hoping thus to reduce it to submission by cutting it off from communication with the north, on which its food and general prosperity depended. In this extremity, Asa, forgetful of the assurance of Divine

¹ 1 Kings xv. 32.

² In 2 Chron. xvi. 1, this invasion of Baasha is said to have taken place in the thirty-sixth year of Asa. But Baasha died in Asa's twenty-sixth year. Thenius, Bertheau, and Ewald offer conjectural emendations of this date, but it is impossible to fix it with confidence. See *Thenius* on 1 Kings xv. 16. *Bertheau* on 2 Chron. xv. 19. *Ewald's Geschichte*, vol. iii. pp. 165, 186. *Art. Asa*, Schenkel's *Lex.*

protection, turned despairingly to the Syrian, Benhadad I. of Damascus, the successor of Rezon and Tabrimmon, whose kingdom was growing rapidly into great power. Collecting all the silver and gold left in the treasuries of the temple and palace, after the enormous ransom paid by Rehoboam to Shishak, he sent them as tribute to Benhadad, to purchase his support against Baasha. Only too glad to weaken the Hebrews, lately the lords of his country, Benhadad at once invaded Northern Israel, and ravaged the country on both sides of the Jordan, taking, among others, the towns of Ijon¹ in the central heights of Lebanon, Dan² and Abel-maim at the foot of Hermon, and most of those on the borders of the Sea of Galilee and throughout Naphtali.³ Attacked thus in his rear, Baasha was forced precipitately to abandon the blockade of Jerusalem, and march to the defence of his own dominions.⁴ The relief to Judah was immediate and complete, but it was dearly bought. Henceforth, till the rise of Assyria, the kings of Damascus were able to interfere in the internal affairs of each of the Jewish kingdoms by turns, to the great hurt of both. Asa had committed the great error, moreover, of forgetting his own words, "that it was nothing with God to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power,"⁵ and instead of trusting in Him, as he was hereafter to do in the Egyptian invasion, had sought aid from a heathen. Such a sin even in so good a man brought a deserved rebuke from the

¹ *Land and Book*, p. 223. Ijon gave its name to a plain 4,750 feet above the sea. This plain is eight to ten miles long and from three to four broad, embosomed among hills. It is one of the richest tracts in Syria, and even now is an unbroken expanse of wheat, beans and lentils in summer. It was at the very north of Naphtali. Oliphant, *Gilead*, p. 17.

² *Land and Book*, p. 250. ³ 1 Kings xv. 20. 2 Chron. xvi. 4.

⁴ 1 Kings xv. 18-21. 2 Chron. xvi. 5. ⁵ 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

prophet Jehu. "He had done foolishly. Henceforth he would have wars"—a prediction only too sadly fulfilled in the reigns of his successors.¹ But for the moment, the prophet paid the penalty of his boldness by being put in the stocks; even Asa finding it hard to realize at all times the prophetic ideal of absolute faith in God,² and, turning with ruffled pride against the true-hearted seer, who, with a noble jealousy of the honour of the fatherland and the true interests of the future, had denounced his action.

Hastily calling out the whole military levy of Judah, Asa took steps, without a moment's delay, to prevent the recurrence of the danger from which he had escaped. Razing to the ground the fortifications of Ramah, he built with their materials strong forts on the two hills, Geba and Mizpeh, commanding both sides of the Jerusalem road, a little nearer the city, and hewed out in them huge reservoirs for water, in case of a siege.³

Thus the reign of Baasha, like that of Jeroboam and Nadab, ended in military disgrace and dishonour, in spite of a vigour and capacity which enabled him to keep his seat on the throne till his death. He might have chosen the part of a true theocratic king, putting away the calf worship of Bethel and Dan, and loyally serving Jehovah, who had raised him "from the dust" to be king over His people. In that case the renewed moral strength of the nation would have brought lasting prosperity. But after murdering the family of Jeroboam, he had continued the offence of that prince, and thus drew down on his own posterity the same curse, which Jehu, the son of Hanani, a prophet, fearless like the rest of his

¹ The war with Baasha seems also to have continued for a time, since the "cities of Ephraim," taken by that monarch, 2 Chron. xvii. 2, can hardly refer to events before the destruction of Ramah.

² 2 Chron. xiv. 7-11.

³ Jer. xli. 9.

order, did not hesitate to pronounce. He himself, however, died in peace at Tirzah, and had honourable burial in the royal tombs.

Elah, his son, by his worthlessness, invited the doom which soon overtook his House. The times demanded a strong ruler, but he was only an enervated debauchee. Leaving his kingdom and his army to themselves, he stayed carousing at Tirzah. But hardly two years passed before his career was abruptly ended. The town of Gibbethon was again being besieged,¹ and there was once more treason in the camp. Baasha had been the general-in-chief. This time the traitor was Zimri, the commander of one of the two brigades of chariots. Driving off with sufficient force to Tirzah, he came on Elah while he was drinking deeply² in the house of his steward, Arza, and slew him. Then followed the common Eastern massacre of the family, including not only Elah's children, and his brothers and sisters, but all their kinsmen, and even their friends; only the queen and the ladies of the harem, apparently, being spared. But vengeance was soon on the track of the murderer. Zimri had usurped the throne without the sanction of the army, and this was bitterly resented. Choosing Omri, the general-in-chief, for king, the camp broke up the siege of Gibbethon, and, marching to Tirzah, invested it. The city itself was soon taken, but the palace still held out. Seeing its fate certain, however, Zimri determined to defraud his enemies, in a measure, of their triumph, by seeking his own death. Retiring to the "castle" or harem of the palace, the innermost building, presumably to revel for the last few moments of his life with its unfortunate inmates, he caused the whole palace to be set on fire, and perished, with his last victims amidst the flames.³

¹ P. 30. *Lit.* making himself "more drunk." ² 1 Kings xvi. 18.

But Omri's victory was not yet secured. The people had hitherto taken no part in the frequent revolutions effected by the army. Now, however, a popular candidate for the throne appeared—Tibni, the son of Ginath, a man otherwise unknown, who was bravely supported by his brother Joram.¹ At last, to the evils of mere dynastic struggles were added those of civil war, for the nation was divided between the competitors for its sovereignty, and fought stoutly on both sides for four years. At length Omri prevailed, Tibni and his brother being slain,² and Omri became sole monarch of the desolated country.

Meanwhile, Asa was still reigning in Jerusalem with vigour and in a true theocratic spirit. The first ten years after his accession, though doubtless troubled by border feuds between his people and Israel, had been comparatively quiet.³ Reflecting the wishes of the best part of his subjects, he reversed the policy of the preceding kings, and took for his ideal his great ancestor, David. Setting his face earnestly against heathenism, he destroyed the idol altars which had been raised by those before him; levelled the high places;⁴ broke down the symbolic Baal-pillars; cut down the Asherahs, and removed the "sun images" made by his father throughout the kingdom; at the same time officially restoring the exclusive worship of Jehovah.⁵ Public opinion supported him in this enforced reformation, which was effected without opposition.⁶ Things had indeed come to a sad state. Maachah, the queen mother, and as such—like the

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 22. *Sept.*

² 1 Kings xvi. 22. *Sept.*

³ 2 Chron. xiv. 1.

⁴ That is, those raised to idols. The high places dedicated to the worship of Jehovah were still left.

⁵ 2 Chron. xiv. 2-5.

⁶ 2 Chron. xiv. 5.

Sultana Valide of the Turkish Court—the most important personage in the State after the king, had been the eager patroness of the heathenism that had prevailed. She had erected a “horrible thing,”—that is, an obscene symbol—to Asherah. This was now burnt to ashes, and strewn in the brook Kedron, as the ashes of the golden calf had been poured into the brook at Sinai by Moses and Aaron,¹ and Maachah herself was deposed from her high dignity.² The gifts dedicated by Asa’s father to Jehovah had been taken into their own sanctuaries by the idol priests, but were now removed, and replaced, with additional gifts of the king, in the temple. The great brazen altar, which had likewise been used for idol sacrifices, was purified, and restored to its place.³

But though such a great religious revolution strengthened the kingdom greatly, it could not at once remove all the dangers to which it was exposed. The war with Baasha had brought danger from the north; another with Egypt imperilled the country from the south. The tribute paid to the Pharaohs since Rehoboam’s defeat may have been refused by Asa, or Baasha may have stirred up the Nile power: in any case, an alarming invasion flooded the land. Jerusalem had anew been girdled by fortified towns which protected it in a measure, but its main human defence was in the vigour and fearless bravery of the king. Zerah, an Ethiopian by birth, a king of the twenty-second Egyptian dynasty,⁴ burst in on Judah with a seemingly irresistible army; but Asa met him with the whole muster of the kingdom, and inflicted on him a severe defeat near Mareshah, on the south-west Maritime Plain. The higher tone of the nation showed itself in its valour, which recalled that of the great times of David.

¹ Exod. xxxii. 20. ² 1 Kings xv. 13. 2 Chron. xv. 16. ³ 1 Kings xv. 15. 2 Chron. xv. 8. ⁴ = Osorkon. *Herzog*, vol. xi. p. 492.

The pursuit reached to Gerar, and ended in the utter rout of the invaders, while the victors took and sacked town after town that had been tributary to Egypt; inflicting severe chastisement at the same time on the Arab tribes who had assisted the enemy, and driving off their great flocks and herds, of sheep and cattle.¹ A true-hearted ruler had fought in reliance on the aid of the invisible King of the land and had triumphed.

Asa had been encouraged in his reforms by the prophets, one of whom, Azariah, the son of Oded, is specially mentioned. The sight was thus once more offered, of the two great powers in the kingdom—the spiritual and temporal—working in harmony; and such a spectacle, added to the vigour and success of Asa in his wars, had its natural effect. The northern kingdom, distracted by revolutions, ruled by the army, and sinking more and more into a mere heathen State, had lost its charms for the more thoughtful among its people. A strong emigration hence set in from Ephraim and Manasseh,² strengthening Asa no less than it weakened

¹ 2 Chron. xiv. 15. Asa's army is said to have numbered 580,000 men, but Kennicott has pointed out (*Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Considered*) that the copyists often fell into error by the different ways of marking numbers, and by confounding the different letters which denoted them, several of which are very like each other. Hence, in the Vulgate printed at Venice, in 1486, and in the old Latin version of Josephus, we find, to quote an illustration, the armies of Abijah and Jeroboam reduced from 400,000 and 800,000 men respectively, to 40,000 and 80,000, while the number of the slain is reduced from 500,000 to 50,000. The throne of Ethiopia, it may be added, was filled at the close of the tenth century before Christ by a king named *Azerch-Amar*—which might readily, by the Hebrew custom of shortening names, become *Zerah*.* It at least shows that the name was a royal one in earlier times.

² 2 Chron. xv. 9.

* Lenormant, *Manuel*, vol. i. pp. 252, 253. Maspero, p. 340.

the Ten Tribes. Many of the Simeonites also, forsaking their tent life in the south, settled in Judah. And now, peace being restored, the king resolved to complete his good work of re-establishing the old faith. In the fifteenth year of his reign, a great public assembly of all the population, native or immigrant, was summoned; sacrifices from the spoils of his battles were offered to Jehovah, the true God, and the whole multitude pledged themselves, amidst the sound of trumpets and cornets, to worship Him alone, and to put to death any who sanctioned idolatry.¹

The remaining years of Asa's reign seem to have been marked by a peaceful prosperity to which the country had long been a stranger. He had committed the grave error of calling in the Syrians against Baasha, but for the time this had wrought well, for at the accession of Omri, Judah held a number of Israelitish towns in the hill country of Ephraim.² Ascending the throne in the last year of Jeroboam, he was destined to outlive Omri's reign of twelve years, after seeing the fall of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Tibni. So strongly did the stability of Judah contrast with the revolutionary changes of Israel.

In Zimri the northern kingdom seemed to have fallen into utter confusion, after a duration of only fifty years. The civil war with Tibni once more, however, called out the manly virtues of the people, for Omri was no mere nominee of the army, but the chosen king of the more vigorous half of the population. Apart from his own special capacity, it was to this his house was in great measure indebted for such a hold on public sympathy as upheld it for four reigns. Yet each of his descendants only increased the calamities of the future by forsaking

¹ 2 Chron xv. 10-14.

² 2 Chron. xv. 8.

more and more completely the ancient religion and the laws of the constitution.

The palace at Tirzah being burned down, and the easy fall of the town having shown the weakness of its position, Omri resolved to choose a new capital; the troublesome restlessness of the people of Shechem forbidding him to return thither. The selection he made shows his sagacity. Six miles north-west from Shechem, in a well-watered valley,¹ an oblong and almost entirely isolated white limestone hill rises some 400 feet. It sinks on the east in long gentle steps to the plain, but is steep and abrupt on all other sides, though terraced in every direction for gardens; perhaps originally for defence.² Proud hills surround it at a short distance, green with a rich vegetation, and intersected by a network of fertile valleys, larger and smaller. Though commanded from the northern range of heights, it must have been nearly impregnable before the introduction of gunpowder. The whole of this hill Omri bought for two talents of silver,³ from one Shemer, a great landowner of the day, whose name lingers in that of the city forthwith built on the site—Samaria, or Shomeron.⁴ The palace and citadel occupied the top of the hill, and the buildings of the town extended down its slopes; a strong wall, along the top of which ran a broad path,⁵ encircling the whole. From

¹ It is, in fact, in the same valley as Shechem. That it should have taken the place of that town as capital was much the same as if Versailles were to become the substitute for Paris, or Windsor for London.

² Jos., *Ant.*, XV. viii. 5.

³ About £600 of our money (*Thenius*). But the purchasing power of money was so much greater then than now, that this sum would be equal to at least £12,000 in our day.

⁴ In Assyrian, "Samirina." Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 92.

⁵ 2 Kings vi. 26, 30.

the palace above the town, Omri could look away to the Mediterranean on the west, the crest of the hill being more than 1,500 feet above its level. On the other sides there was a varied panorama of rounded hills and gentle valleys.¹ On the south was the royal "paradise," with its springs and rich gardens. A leper colony, like that still seen under the walls of Jerusalem, lived outside the gates; a wide open space before which, as in all Eastern cities,



SAMARIA. (W. C. P. Medlicott, pinx.)

afforded fitting place for great ceremonies, when the king appeared in state.² The houses of the town had been at first of brick, with beams and rafters of the common sycamore; but as wealth increased, these largely gave way to mansions of hewn stone and cedar.³ In its palmy days Samaria must have presented an imposing appearance from the valleys and hills around; its streets

¹ Amos iii. 9.

² 1 Kings xxii. 10.

³ Isa. ix. 9, 10.

standing out against the slopes of the majestic hill, in girdling lines.¹

The popular support of Omri was justified by the shrewd sense and vigour of his policy, than which, apart from its religious bearings, nothing could have been more fitted to restore the prosperity of the country or secure its peace. Judah and Israel had been more or less at war for nearly fifty years, and it was at last evident that reunion was hopeless, whether voluntarily or by compulsion; while the result in mutual injury was beyond calculation. Omri, therefore, determined to reverse the policy of his predecessors on this point, and seek peace with the southern kingdom. Even Baasha, with all his vigour and capacity, had wrecked his dynasty against the barren mountains of Judah. Omri would try what the olive branch would do. Firmly seated in his new capital, which almost defied a siege, he concluded a peace with Asa,² and made its continuance one of the great features of the policy of his house. Unfortunately, it had no deeper or nobler basis than to enable the two kingdoms to defend themselves against their common enemies around, and bring these again, if possible, under tribute, as in Solomon's time. The higher destinies of the race,

¹ See *Land and Book*, p. 468. *The Dict. of the Bible*. Furrer's *Palästina*. Schenkel, Stanley, and Ewald. Omri very possibly settled Samaria in part with his soldiers, as David had done at Jerusalem. Graetz says he left Tirzah for Samaria a year after his victory over Tibni; but in 1 Kings xvi. 23, it says he reigned six years in Tirzah. Ewald thinks that of these six years, four passed in war, two as sole king, and that he afterwards reigned ten years in Samaria—in all sixteen years.

² The most friendly relations prevailed between Ahab and Jehoshaphat; but as Ahab was not the man to initiate a policy, this must be traced back to Omri, between whom and Judah, moreover, no war is mentioned.

as the elect of God, to uphold and spread the true religion, which alone could give either lasting prosperity or glory, had no place in Omri's thoughts. The Moabite stone seems to intimate that he forced Moab to resume payment of the tribute of goats and sheep, originally imposed by David, but latterly held back. This, however, brought an attack from Benhadad of Damascus, and peace was obtained only on hard terms, after some towns had been taken from Israel. Samaria was to have a Syrian quarter, for trading purposes; a Syrian Resident was to live permanently in the city, to control Omri's foreign policy, as that of native princes of Asia is dictated by British officers; the towns across the Jordan, taken from Israel, including Ramoth Gilead,² were to be retained by Benhadad, and the roads were to be open for the passage of Syrian caravans through Israel, to the countries beyond.³

But Omri's special idea was to bind his kingdom in as close an alliance as possible with Tyre, the England of that day, in its commercial activity and accumulated wealth. Virtually one in language, his people and the Phenicians were natural allies, but for the hateful and corrupting idolatry, which made isolation the only safety for Israel. Besides, the country depended on Tyrian goods, and Tyrian traders already engrossed the activity of its bazaars. No scruples troubled the king as to a close alliance with a heathen community. Had any good come to Israel by its separation from other races? Had any harm come to Tyre from its religion? Was not its population the richest in the world? If he could bring prosperity to his subjects, it would keep them quiet, and

¹ Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 433.

² 1 Kings xxii. 3.

³ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 483, thinks that a right to march through the country was granted, but this seems unlikely.

make him the master of the different factions, besides enabling him to disband part of the army, and prevent its being, as heretofore, supreme in the State.

The internal politics of Tyre had been latterly as disturbed as those of Israel. King after king had been dethroned and murdered, till at last Ithobaal, or Ethbaal, a priest of Ashtoreth, had seized supreme power, after murdering his brother, Phalles.¹ Such commotions had necessarily weakened the State, especially by causing an extensive emigration of wealthy families, to found new colonies in Northern Africa. Benhadad of Damascus, moreover, now so powerful, was believed to be meditating an attack on the Phenician communities, to absorb them into his empire. Ethbaal was doubtless, therefore, only too willing to conclude an alliance offensive and defensive with Omri, and it was determined to seal it by a marriage between Ahab, the heir to the throne of Israel, and a princess of Tyre. But this event, which must have seemed at the time a great stroke of policy on both sides, proved a supreme calamity in its results. As the marriage of Henrietta Maria determined the fall of the Stuarts, that of JEZEBEL with Ahab carried with it the ruin of Omri's dynasty. She was not the first Israelitish queen of the old Canaanite races, for David had married the daughter of the chief of Geshur,² and Solomon had wives of almost all the neighbouring peoples, including the Hittites and Zidonians.³ But these had hitherto played a subordinate part in the country, though in the case of Solomon they had led to the first formal sanction of idolatry in Jerusalem. Jezebel, however—fierce, imperious, vindictive, able, and unscrupulous, was to show

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. xiii. 1, 2. *C. Apion*, i. 18. Mövers, *Phönizier*, vol. ii. p. 344.

² 1 Chron. iii. 2.

³ 1 Kings xi. 1.

herself the one domineering will in Israel; Ahab, her husband, though king, taking only the second place, as the passive instrument of her stronger nature.

In his eagerness to propitiate Tyre—perhaps also in his belief that to Canaanize his people would protect him from the influence of the prophets, which had been so dangerous to his predecessors—Omri not only ignored the theocratic basis of his kingdom, but lent his active support to the introduction of heathenism. Edicts, known long after as the “Statutes of Omri,”¹ expressly favoured idolatry. The prophets were treated as public enemies.² Even the calf worship was no longer in court favour; to worship Jehovah, with or without a symbol, was out of date. It had kept Israel and Tyre apart, and was now to be discontinued.

This policy, steadily carried out, had its reward. If the morals of the country were being sapped, its wealth was increasing; if the lofty mission of Israel as the people of God was forgotten, there were no revolutions, at least for the time. From the reign of Omri there dates an increase in luxury that speaks of wide commercial activity and success.

The reign of Ahab³ may be remembered as commencing, to use round numbers, 900 years before Christ. A man of weak will, and fond of the show and luxury of royalty, but indisposed to discharge its duties, he was not, as some have thought, a cruel tyrant, so much as feeble in character. Not unwarlike when forced to action, and sensitive for the honour of his house and people, he loved peace, with its refinements and indulgences, and, like his father, promoted it to the utmost. His misfortune was that the strength of will wanting in himself was

¹ Mic. vi. 16.

² 1 Kings xvi. 25.

³ Ahab, B.C. 919–897 (received Bibl. chron.).

predominant in his queen, whose tool he thus became in her worst designs and acts. The wide prosperity Omri had brought to the country continued after his death, and enabled Ahab to gratify his tastes for splendour and self-enjoyment. Samaria remained the capital, but it was too crowded with houses to please him, and he therefore raised a new palace at Jezreel, in the plain of Esdraelon, with rich gardens in which he might take his ease.¹ He was a great builder besides, founding a number of new cities.² Solomon had been contented with a throne of ivory, but the new relations with Tyre, the great centre of the African and Indian trade, enabled Ahab to build a mansion, in the ornamentation of which ivory played a principal part.³ The nobles and richer citizens, participating in the general wealth which such a house implied, vied with each other in costly display and luxury. One Hiel of Bethel ventured, notwithstanding the curse of Joshua, to fortify Jericho, in the rich valley of the Jordan, but he did so at a heavy cost, for he lost his eldest and youngest sons while the work was in progress.⁴ A hundred years later, Amos could still speak of the winter and summer houses of the great northern chiefs—of their splendid mansions and ivory palaces,⁵

¹ Jezreel lies on the watershed between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. The whole plain of Esdraelon, with Carmel, was in view to the west, and to the east the eye wanders down to the oasis of Bethshean on the Jordan. Two springs, one twelve, the other twenty minutes from the town, flow from the base of the hills of Gilboa, which sink into the plain near the town, towards the east.

² 1 Kings xxii. 39.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ 1 Kings xvi. 34. It had been rebuilt for ages, but was now fortified. Judg. i. 16, iii. 13. 2 Sam. x. 5.

⁵ Amos iii. 15.

fitted up luxuriously with ivory couches and costly divans, on which they reclined at their banquets; the old simplicity of sitting on carpets having passed away.¹ Lambs and fatted calves, in former days rare signs of a generous hospitality, had become the daily food. The meals of the rich were splendid feasts, to which they lay down anointed with the costliest perfumes.² Unmixed wine, emptied into huge bowls, in which their fathers had been contented to mingle their wine with water, was now the ordinary drink; and musicians discoursed with harps and viols, as their masters rang out their bacchanalian songs.³ The court movement in favour of heathenism, begun by Omri, continued with increased energy under his son. The alienation from the religious traditions of the nation was complete. All that was sacred in the popular feelings was outraged by the settled purpose of the Crown to extirpate the worship of Jehovah, even under the symbol of Jeroboam's calves, and establish Phenician idolatry as the only tolerated religion of Israel.⁴ This was Jezebel's purpose. Haughty and ambitious; looking on the foreign people among whom she had come, with insolent contempt; a fanatic for the religion of her own country, as was natural in the daughter of a priest, she knew how to make her husband the passive agent in carrying out her plans. A vast temple to Baal was built in Samaria, large enough to contain an immense throng of worshippers.⁵ It stood, apparently, within a great walled enclosure, and rose in such strength as to seem like a castle.⁶ A huge image of the Sun-god, flanked by idolatrous symbols, was seen within, amidst a blaze of splendour, reflected from gilded and painted

¹ 1 Sam. xx. 24.

² Amos vi. 4-7.

³ 1 Kings xvi. 32; 2 Kings x. 21.

⁴ Eccles. ix. 8.

⁵ 1 Kings xvi. 31.

⁶ 2 Kings x. 26.

roofs, and walls, and columns. A staff of 450 priests in their vestments ministered at the altars, and Ahab himself attended the worship in state, presenting rich offerings; doubtless amidst all the wild excitement and license which marked the service of Baal.¹

But the other great Phenician deity could not be neglected. A temple to Asherah, the Canaanite Venus, was built, apparently in the precincts of Jezreel; 400 priests ministering in its courts and offering on its obscene altars.² Of this Jezebel was the especial patroness, maintaining the whole establishment at her own cost.



THE SACRED TREE OF THE ASSYRIANS.³

It is hard to realize the hurtful perversion of conscience, the weakening of moral convictions, and the clouding of true reverence, which such attacks on the sanctities

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 31, xviii. 19. 2 Kings iii. 2; x. 25-27.

² 1 Kings xvi. 33; xviii. 19.

³ It is in its oldest and simplest form in this illustration. The symbol of the god Asshur—the winged circle—is over the royal personages who worship, barefoot. Two good genii stand behind them. Canon Rawlinson thinks the Phenician Asherah, “or grove” of our Version, was the counterpart of the sacred tree of Assyria. *Anc. Mon.*, vol. ii. p. 238.

of religion must have involved ; or how deeply the people must have been corrupted by royal favour shown to a gross and sensual idolatry. Nor could it be hoped that a power which thus trampled on all that was sacred, would hesitate to outrage the lower rights of popular liberty. Everything tended to bring about a deadly struggle against a monarchy which, though established to protect the hereditary religion and privileges of the nation, had been metamorphosed into their imperious and deadly foe. The multitude, led away by royal example, might yield to the ruling fashion, but nobler hearts would turn so much the more against the House of Omri. The magnitude of the interests at stake would rouse the prophets especially, to the intensest resistance. Events were hurrying to a crisis, which, as in all similar decisive moments of history, must bring forward some strong personality, to embody the inarticulate feeling of the multitude, and be its champion. The advent of Elijah was near at hand.

Meanwhile, the contrast of affairs in Judah was striking. At the close of a long and prosperous reign of forty-one years, King Asa died, after suffering for two years with a disease in the feet, apparently the gout,¹ though details are not given. Amidst a high eulogium on his character as a whole, it is gently noted as a failing in his last illness, that he consulted the priestly physicians of the day, apparently with a superstitious trust in their prescriptions, as if, like oracles² or idol sorcerers, their power were supreme ; forgetting to rely, above all, on Jehovah, even when the means were lawful. That such a blemish in the life of so good a man, and he a king, should

¹ *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Asa*.

² So the word is used in 1 Chron. x. 14. 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. 2 Kings i. 2.

have been handed down to the time when the Books of Chronicles were written, throws a strange light on the lofty ideal of religious life in Israel; an ideal which it would be vain to look for in any other people, ancient or modern.

Asa, like an Egyptian king, had built or caused to be hewn out for himself, a new grave, distinct from the royal tombs, with a number of compartments or cells, and in one of these he was buried with great pomp, amidst universal lamentation. His coffin or sarcophagus, moreover, as is especially mentioned, was filled up with a mixture of fragrant spices to help to preserve the body, and a vast quantity of incense was burned in honour of him at his burial, as was customary at the funeral of kings;¹ in imitation of the practice at the death of the Pharaohs of Egypt.² He died in the year B.C. 917.

Jehoshaphat,³ fortunately for Judah, was a worthy son of so good a father. At his accession, Omri was still reigning, but he died two years after, so that Ahab and the new southern king began their reigns almost together. As brave as his father, but more enterprising; equally faithful to Jehovah, but with broader views of his duties as a theocratic ruler; the twenty-five years of his reign were a bright spot in the history of his country. He was in his early prime at his father's death—a man of 35—sensitive to the honour of his fatherland, ready to make sacrifices for its independence, and bent on raising its religious and moral tone still higher than his father had succeeded in doing.

To protect himself from without, garrisons were placed

¹ 2 Chron. xvi. 12–14. Jer. xxxiv. 5.

² *Wilkinson*, vol. ii. p. 385.

³ =Jehovah judges, *Cheyne*; or, Jehovah judges rightly, *Mühlau und Volck*. Asa, by the way, means "the physician."

in the walled towns of Judah, and in those places in the hill country of Ephraim, the capture of which had darkened the close of Baasha's reign.¹ He also built new fortresses in Judah, and military and trade depots, which he filled with all kinds of stores.² The muster roll of the kingdom was carefully kept, so that all the men able to bear arms could be called out, if necessary, at once. The result of so much vigour was seen alike at home and abroad. Thoroughly loyal, the people everywhere freely contributed to support the throne with becoming state; the Philistines once more paid tribute, which had been intermitted for a time, and even the tent Arabs of the south-east did the same in flocks of sheep and goats.³ The southern kingdom had not been held in so great respect since the death of Solomon.

But Jehoshaphat was much more than merely a vigorous and politic ruler. He felt with even greater force than Asa that the prosperity of a people depends on their morality, and that this in turn is determined by their religion. Here and there over the land there still remained some Asherahs with their foul impurity, and some idolatrous high places. These he at once destroyed,⁴ though he did not attempt to remove those high places or local altars which were dedicated to Jehovah.⁵ It was, indeed, time that the cancer of heathenism should be eradicated from the kingdom as far as possible. On the top of the hills, as sacred to the sun-god, "under every green tree and under every thick oak,"⁶ gay-coloured tents were pitched for the obscenities of Asherah worship, for there were still temple harlots in the land.⁷ Gaudy images of

¹ 2 Chron. xvii. 1, 2.

Ibid., ver. 9-11.

Ibid. xx. 33.

³ Kings xxii. 26.

² *Ibid.*, ver. 12, 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ver. 6.

⁵ Ezek. vi. 13. 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

Baal in his different characters, resplendent in gold and silver, and mingled, perhaps, with symbols of Jehovah, stood robed in costly vestments, and were honoured with incense and offerings of bread and fine flour, and oil and honey. Still worse, sacrifices of children of both sexes were too common.¹

But merely external reformation is necessarily superficial, nor can the forcible removal of the outward symptoms of evil secure its repudiation in the heart and life. To effect this, Jehoshaphat wisely felt that the ignorance from which in part it sprang must be enlightened, and worthier conceptions supplied to engage the interest of the multitude. He determined, therefore, to establish, throughout the land, a general system of religious instruction, based on the one true foundation of sound morals and healthy religious life—"the Book of the Law of Jehovah."² A royal commission of five "princes" was entrusted with this great undertaking; nine Levites and two priests being associated with them as their colleagues; assisted doubtless by a multitude of local teachers from the priests and Levites, appointed in the different cities and towns. A lesson this to modern legislation! It was an honest and frank confession by king and people that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and that the

¹ Ezek. xvi. 16-21. Smend thinks the children were killed first, quoting Gen. xxii. 10. 1 Sam. xv. 33. *Ezekiel*, pp. 94, 95.

² 2 Chron. xvii. 9. The mention of the "Thorah" or "Law" as already known and in public use in the 10th century before Christ is fatal to the theory advanced of late years that it is a creation of the days of Josiah, 300 years later. But if thus recognised as the national Scriptures so early, what ground is left for challenging its origin, essentially in its present form, in the Mosaic age? What age between Moses and Jehoshaphat could have palmed off its productions as veritable relics of Sinai, which the "Books of the Law" claim to be?

word of God is the only true lamp to the feet, or light to the path, of a nation or an individual.

Nor was the establishment of a national system of godly education the only fundamental reform of this pattern ruler. Justice had become tainted at its source. It was impossible that the king should personally try all cases in so great a community. Judges of civil and criminal cases were therefore appointed to sit in all the fortified towns; these being the centres of population. Nobler charge to these dignitaries could no man give, than that which they received. "Ye are to judge, not for men, to win bribes or favour the strong, but as before Jehovah, the true king of Israel, whose laws you are to administer, and whose eyes watch you as you sit on the judgment seat. No injustice, or respect of persons, or taking of bribes passes unnoticed by Him."¹ In such a kingdom as Judah, however, ecclesiastical courts, also, were essential, and these were established in Jerusalem. Skilled Levites, priests, and heads of "houses" were appointed to the high office. Questions involving the distinction between manslaughter and murder, or the meaning and application of different ecclesiastical laws,² were to be decided by them as a great court of appeal, the high priest acting as president.³ A layman, "the prince of the House of Judah," was president of the court of civil and criminal law.

¹ 2 Chron. xix. 5-7. ² Deut. xvii. 8-11. ³ 2 Chron. xix. 11.

Note on n. 1, p. 38.—Dillmann thinks Zerah was only the Egyptian general, and that he is called "the Ethiopian," either from his nationality, or from his bearing the honorary title, frequent in the earlier Egyptian dynasties, of "Prince of Ethiopia." The governor of Nubia, of the royal family, was so styled. He is not called "King of Ethiopia" in the Book of Chronicles. *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 283. Brugsch, *Histoire d'Egypte*, Leipzig, 1859, p. 89.



CHAPTER III.

ELIJAH ; THE GREAT PROPHET-REFORMER.

WHILE Judah was steadily retracing its steps from the errors of late years to the sound and healthy principles of purer times, Ahab and his wife Jezebel, were leading Israel constantly farther from them. Baal worship was now the established religion of the State, that of Jehovah being proscribed. Bands of wretched beings "consecrated" to Baal and Asherah, as described in a former chapter,¹ wandered through the land, stirring the towns and villages to a strange excitement. The loose women connected with the idol temples plied their arts far and near. Pompous rites on a magnificent scale were celebrated in the heathen temples, for Jezebel hoped by such means to drive out the worship of Jehovah from Israel. A crusade was systematically carried out under the orders of a high priest of Baal.² The altars of God were everywhere overthrown,³ and others, with the obscene symbols of the Phenician idols, erected in their stead. The people were forced to offer at these, and having no other holy places, largely apostatized. Only 7,000 could ere long be found who had not bowed the knee to the idol image, or kissed their hands to it in

¹ See vol. iii. p. 464.

² 2 Kings xi. 18.

³ 1 Kings xix. 10, 14; xviii. 30.

homage.¹ A fierce onslaught against the prophets had cut them down wherever found, and doubtless many others, faithful to Jehovah, had perished with them. It is the first religious persecution known in history, and fittingly had Jezebel for its instigator and author. To this time, no doubt, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers when he speaks of the faithful wandering about in sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented; hiding themselves in deserts, or the depth of mountains, or the darkness of caverns.² Some leader was needed to keep the nation from finally passing over wholly to heathenism; to strengthen the weak and timid; to rouse the supine, and to kindle enthusiasm by his noble fidelity, fervour, and self-sacrifice. Such a hero appeared in Elijah.

The steady political and religious decay of the northern kingdom had had its natural effect in a striking development of the order of prophets—the defenders of popular rights and the champions of the ancient faith. They had never failed since the time of Samuel; but in the interval between his day and that of Elijah, no associated companies of them are mentioned. In the reign of Ahab, however, we find no fewer than 400 assembled in Samaria at one time; and Obadiah, the court chamberlain, a worshipper of Jehovah, was able to conceal a hundred, by fifties, in two caverns, during the hottest of the persecution. In ordinary times the people sought their help and trusted in their utterances with unquestioning reverence;³ their word was a command; they were lawgivers in the State, and virtually commanders in war. Nor could any prince, however opposed to them, permanently resist their influence. He might drive them

¹ 1 Kings xix. 18.

² Heb. xi. 37, 38.

³ 1 Kings xiv. 2. 2 Kings iv. 1 ff.

off for a time, but before long he was glad to seek their counsel once more, and to obey their directions.¹ Nor could the fiercest measures destroy an institution so deeply rooted in the popular esteem, for we find the prophet societies flourishing after the close of Jezebel's proscription, at the ancient holy centres of Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho.²

On the prophets rested the hope of the future. The degraded priesthood that had supplanted that of Aaron had entirely lost position and independence. Unfortunately, the times which had tried others put the prophets also to a test which too many of them failed to stand. The fierceness of Jezebel terrified not a few into silence. Many fled to the security of the desert or the hills, and large numbers were won over to an outward conformity to Baal worship, or, at least, to a politic and unworthy complaisance towards power. From Ahab's reign there appear "false prophets;" men who, to get quiet, or honour, or pay, used their high gifts to flatter and serve the great, by prophesying what they fancied would please.³ Henceforward the pure and noble among the order had to contend, with ever-increasing earnestness, against this corruption and debasement of some of its members, and were too often persecuted by them.⁴

Still, amidst this reign of terror, there were some faithful Abdiels who clung to the religion of their fathers, and among these, but high above them all, towered Elijah, "the grandest and most romantic character that

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 16; xxii. 5. 2 Kings i. 2; iii. 11.

² 2 Kings ii. 2-7, 15-22; iv. 23, 38; vi. 1-7.

³ 1 Kings xxii. 8.

⁴ 1 Kings xxii. 22. Jer. xxiii. 9-40. Ezek. xiii. 2. Zech. xiii 3-6. Isa. ix. 15; xxviii. 7. Mic. ii. 11; iii. 11.

Israel ever produced.”¹ He had the greatness of soul to stand up singly, face to face with the whole power of the kingdom, on behalf of Jehovah. Appearing and disappearing like an apparition, his life depending on his rapid flight after delivering his message, no dangers kept him back from any point where duty demanded his presence. He shows how one man, strong in the support of God and the right, can by fearless courage and absorbing zeal change the whole course of history in his time ; resist and overthrow the most crushing tyranny over conscience, and bring in a new victorious epoch. He was an anticipation of Athanasius in his grand attitude of standing “alone against the world,” and he was the conqueror in the struggle.

The abruptness of his introduction adds to the interest of his story. Nothing is told us of his parentage or birthplace, beyond the words “Elijah, the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead ;” but where Tishbeh was is as yet altogether uncertain.² His whole character, however, and his appearance and habits of life, point to his being a Gileadite, though it seems impossible to believe with Graetz that he was not an Israelite, but belonged to one of the old native races.³ Gilead was a land of chase and pasture, of tent villages and mountain castles ; with a population of wandering, half-civilized, fierce shepherds, ready at all times to repel the attacks of the desert tribes, or to go out on a foray against them.⁴ Many of these

¹ *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 328.

² The *Sept.* has “Tishbeh of Gilead.” It has been fancied from a verse in Tobit (i. 2), that Tishbeh was in Naphtali. But this is not tenable. It seems an error in translation. In the *Handbuch zu den Apokryphen*, vol. ii. p. 23, Fritzsche thinks there was a Tishbeh in Gilead and another in Naphtali.

³ *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 28.

⁴ 1 Chron. v. 10, 19–22.

Arab traits are seen in the notices of Elijah. Apparently tall,¹ he must have been sinewy and thin from his simple fare, his hard life, the rapidity of his movements, and his powers of physical endurance. His hair hung long and thick down his back, for he was a Nazarite. It would seem, indeed, that the prophets as a rule took this vow.² His dress was a simple tunic, held round him by a belt of hide, which he tightened when, like a Bedouin, he wished to run for a long distance.³ Over this he commonly wore, like the peasants of Palestine now, a mantle or cape of sheepskin⁴ with the wool on it, or of coarse camel's hair cloth, which, as already noticed, became the special characteristic of prophets.⁵ In this mantle he at times hid his face when under strong emotion,⁶ and he used it, rolled up like a staff, to smite the waters of Jordan when about to pass over them.⁷ On one occasion we find him bowing himself on the ground, with his face between his knees, perhaps in prayer, though the usual attitude in devotion was to stand.⁸

The immense influence of Elijah during his life is seen in the place he held in the memory of after generations in Israel. He takes rank along with Samuel and Moses; not like the former, as the apostle of a system yet undeveloped; or as the founder of a religion, like the latter;

¹ This is the Jewish tradition.

² Amos ii. 11, 12.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 46.

⁴ The word for this garment is that used to describe the hair which covered Esau (Gen. xxv. 25), and for the Babylonish garment stolen by Achan (Josh. vii. 21), but it is not used in connection with any prophet before Elijah.

⁵ Zech. xiii. 4. Isa. xx. 2. Matt. iii. 4.

⁶ 1 Kings xix. 13.

⁷ 2 Kings ii. 8.

⁸ 1 Kings xviii. 42. Mark xi. 25. Matt. vi. 5.

but as the restorer of the old when it was almost driven from the earth. The prophet Malachi portrays him as the announcer of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. His reappearance was constantly expected as the precursor of the Messiah. So continually was he in the thoughts of the people of New Testament times that both John the Baptist and our Lord were supposed to be no other than he.¹ The son of Sirach calls him a fire, and says that his word burned like a torch,² and that it was he who was to gather together again the tribes of Israel from the great dispersion.³ The Jews believe that he has appeared often to wise and good Rabbis, generally under the form of an Arab merchant.⁴ At the circumcision of Jewish children, a seat is always left vacant for him.⁵ After the wine cup of each passover is drunk, the youngest child of a Jewish family opens the door, and all rise and look towards it, thinking that Elijah then enters.⁶ His final coming, it is believed, will be three days before that of the Messiah, and on each of the three he will proclaim peace, happiness, and salvation, in a voice that will be heard over all the earth.⁷ So firm, indeed, was the conviction of this in the days of the Talmud, that when goods were found which no owner

¹ Matt. xi. 14. Mark ix. 11. Luke i. 17. Matt. xvii. 12, 13; xvi. 14. Mark vi. 15. John i. 21. The dervishes of the East have evidently copied their habits, in part, from traditions of Elijah. They wear their hair its full length, and wind a leather strap round their waist as a girdle. *Morier, MS. Notes.* See vol iii. p. 67.

² Eccclus. xlviii. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 10.

⁴ *Eisenmenger*, vol. i. p. 11; vol. ii. pp. 402-7.

⁵ Isaac's *Manners, etc., of the Jews*, p. 118.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷ *Eisenmenger*, vol. i. p. 685.

claimed, the common saying was, Put them by till Elijah comes.¹

Like every great enthusiastic soul, that of Elijah kindled others by his words and example. He quickened the religious life of the nation, as Samuel had done in his day. Thus, the sect of the Rechabites seems to have owed its origin to him—a body of faithful servants of God collected by Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who retired from the strife and persecution of the times, to worship Jehovah in seclusion from the temptations and trials of the world. The hope of the future, they fancied, lay in a strict return to the simplicity and strictness of the past, and they therefore bound themselves to live in tents. They chose the lonely wilderness of the Southern Jordan for their home; and adopted in their fulness the vows of Nazarites. Abstaining from wine and the grape, they confined themselves for food to the productions of the desert, and formally bound themselves to have neither tilled land, nor vineyards, nor fixed dwellings.²

But the most striking result of the appearance of Elijah was the impulse he gave to prophetic activity. The communities of sons, or disciples, of the prophets, of which there is no mention from the earlier years of David, appear again in the fullest vigour,³ cherishing the ancient faith in the calm and seclusion of their settlements. Among these there were not wanting such as Micaiah,⁴ to stand up boldly, like Elijah, before the world, for the truth. The honoured servant of Elijah, Elisha, the son of Shaphat,⁵ especially takes a grand place

¹ Lightfoot, *Exercit.* Matt. xvii. 10. John i. 21.

² Jer. xxxv. 5-10. See Graetz, vol. ii. p. 29. *Eisenlohr*, vol. ii. p. 166.

³ 2 Kings ii. 2-7, 15-22; iv. 38; vi. 1-7. ⁴ 1 Kings xxii. 9.

⁵ Shaphat = a judge, marking the rank of the prophet's father.

as the champion of Jehovah, and, after him, generations of his order showed, in their zeal and incorruptible loyalty to God, how deeply the example of the Tishbite had stirred them.

Yet the work of Elijah, with all its glory, was marked by the imperfection of the dispensation to which he belonged. The defender of a national theocracy, he burst on his age as a minister of judgment against unrighteousness: his sternness like that of the storm; his words lightning and tempest. All his acts show him, like a fire, consuming the ungodly; an embodiment of the avenging justice of Jehovah in an evil day. Glowing zeal, dauntlessness of soul, and unbending severity are his leading traits, though he showed the gentlest sympathy in the relations of private life.¹ As the great and strong wind, and the earthquake and fire, rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks, before Jehovah—the awful precursors of the still small voice, for which they prepared the way—Elijah came to open the path for the kingdom of God, and bring about a state of things in which its gentle message of love could be proclaimed amongst men. He was not so much the foreshadowing image of our Divine Master as a contrast to His Spirit. The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The wish of His disciples to call down fire from heaven, as Elijah had done, to consume those who refused to receive Him, evoked only a rebuke from Jesus Christ.²

The first appearance of Elijah is introduced with a startling suddenness. In the opening of a verse he is in the presence of Ahab, and at its close he vanishes, we know not whither. The persecution had cut off many of his brethren, but he, the most hated of all, had eluded his

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 8 ff.

² Luke ix. 54, 55.

enemies, and now fearlessly approached the king, to denounce his weakness and wickedness, and make known an impending judgment on himself and the nation for their sins. Advancing with undismayed bearing to the royal chariot, he delivers his message as Ahab rides past in some lonely spot, without Queen Jezebel, whom, with a keen estimate of the character of both, Elijah carefully shuns. The guilty man is appalled by hearing that, "As surely as Jehovah, the one only God of Israel, lives"—that God before whom, in defiance of king and court, the prophet stands, as a servant before an earthly monarch, waiting His commands, looking only to Him as his Lord, and ready to defend His word against the whole power of man—the guilt of Ahab, and that of the nation in suffering him to act as he did, and in turning after him to serve strange gods, will be visited by the terrible curse of "there being no dew nor rain these years, but according to Elijah's word."¹ The kingly power had so crushed the ancient liberties of Israel, by the establishment of a military despotism, that it was virtually supreme. But it was cowed before the apparition of one who grandly proclaimed his allegiance to the invisible God, and dared to be faithful to Him in defiance of all earthly authority. The lofty spirit of Elijah, contending for the truth, carried with it a victorious and invincible power, both in itself and in its hold on the sympathies of men, like that which, in modern times, made Mary of Guise dread the prayers of Knox more than an army of 10,000 men. But though arrested and alarmed for the moment, the strong will of Jezebel soon dissipated any passing goodness in her husband, and the persecution continued, drawing with it the curse of God on the land. A failure of rain was presently

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 1.

noted; one of the most terrible calamities in a country where water is in the strictest sense the condition of life. No trace of a cloud relieved the awful brightness of the heavens. The seed died in the ground; the landscape was everywhere scorched into barrenness. The hollow of the sky glowed like brass, and the earth grew like iron.¹ The brooks failed, and with them the fringe of green on their borders. The pools in their deeper parts and in the beds of torrents dried up. The water in the huge underground cisterns over the country was ere long exhausted. Winter brought no relief. No former or latter rains fell in the autumn or spring. The land lay gasping under a terrible spell, which the idol priests could do nothing to remove. The drought extended even to Phenicia,² as we learn not only from the Scriptures, but from a heathen writer quoted by Josephus. "There was a want of rain," says he, "for a year, under Ethbaal" (the father of Jezebel); "but," he adds, "when he made great prayers, heavy thunderstorms came."³ This was no doubt the drought foretold by Elijah, though it lasted three years in Israel, and its cessation was due to the death of Baal's priests, not to their supplications.

Meanwhile Elijah fled to the Cherith, on the east of the Jordan, where so many torrents cleave the high table-lands of Gilead, and the abundant woods secure a long supply of water. The position of this retreat is not known; but in the thickets that hung over the yet unexhausted stream, the prophet hid himself for the time. There, we are told, he drank of the brook, and was supported by bread and flesh brought him each morning and evening by ravens, whose voracious habits his Divine Master had

¹ Deut. xxviii. 23.

² 1 Kings xvii. 14.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. xiii. 4.

controlled so that they became the ministers to His servant in his necessity.¹ After a time, however, the pools in the bed of the Cherith dried up; the thickets on its banks withered, and the very birds had to forsake the spot. Another refuge was imperative, and this time it was found, by Divine direction, at Zarephath, the modern village of Sarafend, on the shore of the Mediterranean, about ten miles south of Sidon. No one in Israel was to have the honour of entertaining the prophet.² The heights of Lebanon, with their many rivers and streams, must have supplied Phenicia with water long after it had become scarce in Israel, and the very daring which sought shelter in the territory of Ethbaal would of itself make that retreat the more secure.

In this remote village, overlooking the plain and the sea, lived a widow of the same race and religion as Jezebel herself,³ but very different in spirit. As Elijah, tired and faint with long travel, approached the gate of the town, she had come to the open space outside, to gather a few sticks in preparation for what she thought would be her last meal; for the drought had raised prices beyond the reach of a poor widow. While thus busy, the voice of the stranger arrested her. "Would she bring

¹ It is a lesson to the Inquisitors who regard any trace of mental freedom in a religious book as justifying their pious denunciation of the author, that Dr. Kitto, whom no one with either head or heart would accuse of heresy, timidly suggests, as if under terror of some literary Torquemada, that instead of *Orebim*, "ravens," we should read *Arbim*, "Arabs," by changing the vowels. (*Bib. Illust.*, vol. iv. p. 219.) But this change is inadmissible, from the unanimity of the Hebrew MSS. It is to be noticed that there is no other trace of the miraculous in the passage.

² How greatly that honour was prized is well shown in Strauss, *Pilgrimage of Helon*, vol. i. p. 17.

³ She says, "thy God." 1 Kings xvii. 12.

him a drink of water?" Elijah had asked this to test whether he had found her to whom he had been sent, and her instant compliance showed him that he had. A further request, therefore, followed, on her going off for the water, that she would bring him "a morsel of bread in her hand." But her means were at the lowest, for she had only a handful of meal left in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse. The gaunt, travel-worn stranger, however, knew how to win her kind offices. His appearance, very probably, convinced her that he was a "holy man;" a title often given to the devotees of Eastern religions. Trusting his assurance that Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom, now as ever, he openly owned, even in such times and in Phenicia, would keep her meal and oil from failing till He sent rain on the earth,¹ she hastened to obey him.

After such an introduction, he found a hearty welcome in the widow's house. She had seen better days, for her house had an "aliyah" or roof-chamber built over it—the room specially appropriated for guests, as the best furnished in the house,² and usually dedicated, in a well-ordered family, to meditation and prayer.³ In this or some other retreat the prophet must have spent more than two years, during which the miracle of the restoration of the widow's son to life took place; Jewish tradition adding that he afterwards waited on Elijah in his journeys, and finally became the first prophet to the heathen world—Jonah, the son of Amittai—the messenger of God to guilty Nineveh.⁴

Meanwhile the awful drought continued, bringing in

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 8-16.

² *Land and Book*, p. 160.

³ *Helon's Pilgrimage*, vol. i. p. 20. See p. 116.

⁴ Eisenmenger, *Entd. Jud.*, vol. ii. p. 725.

its train all the horrors of famine on the northern kingdom. Samaria itself suffered terribly.¹ Pasture at last utterly failed even for the royal horses and mules.² Field crops had long since disappeared, but it might still be hoped that some grass could be found round the springs which abound in Central Palestine, or in the holes and shady spots of torrent beds, where a little moisture would perhaps yet remain. In his extremity, Ahab himself determined to search the country for relief, along with the chamberlain of the palace, his most confidential officer; each taking a separate route. Suddenly, as Obadiah was on his journey, Elijah stood before him. He had been long sought for by Jezebel, acting in Ahab's name, through all the neighbouring kingdoms; an oath being demanded from each that he could not be found in it; and, now, he is in Ahab's very neighbourhood. At such an apparition, the minister, overwhelmed with awe, fell on his face, as before one rightly claiming the lowliest reverence.³ Two words only, but two of awful significance to the faithful Obadiah, followed, as a summons to take to the king—"Behold—Elijah!" Ahab would expect that his servant would then and there have killed the prophet, rather than bear his message. Moreover, it was a daring thing to ask an Eastern king to come to a subject, instead of that subject humbly approaching the monarch. Was not his tried fidelity to Jehovah in the past, added Obadiah, a ground for some favour now? He had kept a hundred prophets alive through the persecution and famine, feeding them on all the times afforded, bread and water, and hiding them in

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 2.

² *Ibid.*, ver. 5. The words "that we lose not all," are translated by Thenius "so that we shall have to kill some of them."

³ 1 Kings xviii. 7, 9.

secure hill caves. Elijah might be carried off by the Spirit of God as suddenly as he had come, and, in that case, to tell Ahab that he had been seen and not slain would be the messenger's death. Being assured, however, that the prophet would face the king, Obadiah went to him and he at once obeyed the summons. His rough salute, "Art thou there, O troubler of Israel?" soon calmed into awe as Elijah retorted the charge on him and his House. *He* had troubled Israel by forsaking Jehovah and following the Baals. Quailing before the dreaded "man of God," Ahab listened with alarmed submission. King elsewhere, he had now found a master in whose hands he was only a passive instrument. He was commanded, rather than asked, to summon the prophets of Baal and Asherah to a great meeting at Mount Carmel, Elijah's special haunt, and already a holy place, famous for an altar of Jehovah, now overthrown, like all others, throughout the land. No spot could have been more fitting for the purpose intended. The long range of Carmel, some parts of which rise 1,600 and 1,700 feet above the sea, skirts the whole south of Esdraelon. Of this the promontory at the western end, rising about 600 feet above the waters at its foot, was chosen. Though then bare and scorched, like the whole country, its luxuriant richness in ordinary times was a proverb. Its "excellency"¹ was the ideal of supreme fertility to the Hebrew mind. Rocky dells with deep jungles of copse, shrubberies thicker than any others in Central Palestine, open glades, and slopes bright with hollyhocks, jasmine, flowery creepers, and a world of blossoms, shrubs, and fragrant herbs, still delight the eye.² In comparison even with the hills of Samaria, the sides of which alone

¹ Isa. xxxiii. 9. Mic. vii. 14.

² *Stanley. Porter. Vandevelde. Martineau.*

were fruitful, Carmel, crowned as well as clothed with verdure, was the paradise of the land. The altar on it was a great place of religious resort on new moons and Sabbaths.¹ Its reputation as a sanctuary, centuries later, led Pythagoras thither, while Tacitus tells us that Vespasian found on it, even in his time, an altar without image or temple.² It was, moreover, at a prudent distance from Samaria and Jezreel for Elijah's present purpose.

On the appointed day the 450 prophets of Baal assembled at the indicated spot, but those of Asherah seem to have been kept back by Jezebel. The place selected appears to have been the summit of the height at the east end of the promontory, offering the last view of the sea and the first of the great plain of Esdraelon. From amidst a belt of fine trees a line of cliffs rises more than 200 feet; the crest bearing the name of El Maharrakah—the “burning” or “the sacrifice.”³ Here lay scattered the stones of the altar of Jehovah, which had been recently thrown down; and hither, apparently from a tradition of the fact, the Druses still come yearly from Lebanon in great numbers to offer sacrifice. Close beneath the rocks, under the shade of ancient olive trees, is a well which is said never to fail, and this, even after the long drought, still held sufficient water to supply Elijah with as much as he required. Round this were

¹ 2 Kings iv. 23.

² *Dict. of Geog.*, art. *Carmelus*.

³ Vandevelde says this must be the spot, as it is the only point of all Carmel where the Kishon is near enough to take the priests of Baal to it, and return to the hill to pray, after slaying them. Nowhere else does the stream run so close to Carmel. The top of the cliff commands an uninterrupted view of the sea, and may be reached from the well in a few minutes. See also Col. Wilson, R.E., in *Bibl. Educ.*, vol. iv. p. 119.

ranged, on one side the king and people, with the prophets of Baal, in their white robes and peaked turbans. On the other, supported only by his single attendant, stood the solitary prophet of Jehovah, his rough sheep-skin mantle over his shoulders, his simple linen tunic held together by a strap of hide, and his long hair hanging down his back, or blown by the mountain breeze. But, though alone, his bearing was that of a king of men, whose orders all present at once almost involuntarily



EL MAHARRAKAH, THE SUPPOSED SCENE OF ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.
W. C. P. Medlicott, Pinx.

obeyed. About 25 miles off, on the south-west, rose the city of Jezreel, on its green hill, with Ahab's palace and stately gardens, in which perhaps was Jezebel's temple of Asherah. Close under the hill was the deep bed of the Kishon, at the moment a mere stony gulf, from which the water had long since disappeared.

It was early morning, when Baal was worshipped as the rising sun. Calling to the people, Elijah upbraided them with their fickleness. "How long," asked he,

“ will you limp now on one foot and then on the other ? ” or, as Graetz understands it, will ye hop back and forward like birds, from one perch to another ? “ If Jehovah be God, follow Him ; if Baal, follow him.” But the multitude were silent. Every incident that follows is striking. The steps by which the prophet proposes to decide the claims of Jehovah and His idol rival—that an altar should be built for each, to be kindled by fire from heaven, which Baal, the sun-god, could surely, above all others, send most easily ; the irony with which he jeers the priests of Baal as they circled, hour after hour, round their altar and sacrifice, in wild Oriental fanaticism, with shrill cries, and frenzied excitement ; their hair streaming in the wind, their faces painted ; loud savage music adding to the din.¹ “ Cry louder,”

¹ The following description of the dance of dervishes in Egypt illustrates that of the priests of Baal which Elijah’s words mock :—

“ About thirty dervishes stood in a half-circle, bowing themselves backwards and forwards with great energy to the sound of kettle drums and cymbals. Every time they rose upright, a frightful cry broke out from each, ‘ Allah is good.’ These were howling dervishes ; but there was also a dancing dervish present. Dressed in white, he stood in the middle of the half-circle, and turned round and round with incredible speed, his arms stretched out to the full. The sheik acted as leader of the whole. The common dervishes seemed vulgar and poor, and were variously clad. The most zealous had long hair hanging loose, which fell over their faces as they bowed, reaching to their feet ; then, as they rose, flying back far behind their heads. This lasted a quarter of an hour, the rate of bowing growing always faster, and the noise more and more terrible. One grew dizzy with the sight, and it would have been no surprise had they fallen senseless, as sometimes happens. After a time the leader began reciting a sura of the Koran, to which the others answered with nasal responses. They were all wildly excited.” Orelli, *Durch’s Heilige Land*. “ The modern dervishes, like Baal’s priests, when in their highest excitement, often cut themselves with knives and swords till they

said Elijah, as no answer came from morning to noon to their incessant cries of "Ha Baal anænu! Ha Baal anænu!" "Hear us, O Baal!" "He is a god, and must listen to such fervent prayers. But perhaps he has his head full and cannot listen, or is out of the way, or perhaps he is sleeping, and, if so, his servants won't let him be disturbed."¹ Driven to frenzy by such jibes, they broke into still wilder excitement; strove to move the god by cutting themselves with the swords and knives they always carried for the purpose, till the blood streamed over their vestments and limbs; nor did they desist till the time of the evening sacrifice, as the sun was sinking towards the sea in the west.

Then, at last, Elijah, as calm as the priests of Baal had been frenzied, orders them to stand aside;² with his own hands repairs with twelve stones the ruined altar of Jehovah, in memory of the twelve tribes of undivided Israel; makes the people dig a trench round it as broad as a two-peck measure,³ and drench the altar and the sacrifice on it three times with water from the well at hand, till the very trench was full. And now, advancing with calm dignity, he utters loudly in the evening air a brief but earnest prayer: "Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that *Thou* art God in Israel, and I Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that Thou, Jehovah, art God, and that what happens has been appointed by Thee,

faint with loss of blood. They also pierce their almost naked bodies with wooden or iron spikes, from which they hang mirrors framed in wood." *Van Lennep*.

¹ Thenius, 1 *B. d. Könige*, c. xviii. v. 27.

² 1 Kings xviii. 30. *Sept.*

³ Two seahs. *Conder*, p. 80.

to turn their hearts back again to Thyself.”¹ “Then,” we are told, “the fire of Jehovah fell,” consuming not only the sacrifice, but the wood below it, the stones, and the very dust of the altar, and licking up the water in the trench. Such a miracle, at such a time, with such antecedent excitement, awed the vast multitude. Casting themselves on their faces, a universal shout arose, “Jehovah, He is God ! Jehovah, He is God !” Elijah was supreme. His least word, as that of one visibly speaking for the Almighty, was law. His triumph had rekindled in all, the old zeal for the God of their fathers. It was now possible to carry out sternly the Divine proscription of idolaters in Israel. The persecutors had become the victims. Ordering the crowd to seize Baal’s priests, and lead them down the hill to the edge of the deep channel of Kishon, Elijah himself and the multitude with him slew them to a man, throwing their corpses, we may suppose, into the bed of the torrent, unburied, to be washed out to sea by the coming storm.

Meanwhile, Ahab, confounded and paralysed, was a passive spectator. He had allowed the massacre of the priests apparently without an effort to save them. A sacrifice was always followed by a feast, and this was now spread on the top of the hill, beside the altar of God ; the king joining in it. Already the partial purification of the land from idolatry had been accepted as a sign of national penitence, and the curse of drought recalled. The sound of abundant rain, as yet unnoticed by others, was heard by the prophet. Retiring to the upper slope of the hill, and casting himself down on the earth, his face between his knees, doubtless in prayer, his attendant, at his command, went out seven times to the edge of the hill, where the view over the sea beneath was

¹ *Thenius*. 1 Kings xviii. 37.

unbroken. The sky was still cloudless; the ocean calm. At last he could report that in the clear air of an Eastern night he saw a small cloud rising out of the waters—the well-known sign in the Levant of a coming storm.¹ Not a moment was to be lost, for the heavens darkened apace, and the sea rose in foam before the driving hurricane. Hastily mounting his chariot, therefore, at the foot of



VIEW FROM CARMEL. W. C. P. Medlycott, Pinx.

the hill, the king drove off in pale haste, while the great plain was yet practicable; to get to Jezreel before the

¹ Luke xii. 54. Emerson, in his *Letters from the Egean*, speaks of a storm which broke on a Greek vessel in which he was—as indicated beforehand, on a clear bright morning, by a small black cloud seen on the verge of the horizon to the south. It spread rapidly over the sky, and the ship only escaped disaster by instantly striking sail, and scudding with bare poles before the hurricane. See also, Col. Wilson, R.E., in *Bibl. Educ.*, vol. ii. p. 216.

wild night flooded the hollows which seamed it in every direction. Through the fierce storm, however, with its darkness and sheets of rain, the way gleaming only by moments before him at each lightning flash, Elijah, Arab like, tightening his belt, ran ahead of the chariot the whole way to Jezreel, as if to guarantee the king's safety, and to show him respect, now he had done his duty. But at the entrance to the town he vanished into the darkness, and was gone. He would not come near Jezebel.¹

¹ The wide diffusion of the worship of Baal is shown by customs which have lingered almost to our own day in Ireland, Wales, and the Highlands of Scotland. Two days in the year—the 1st of May and the 31st October—the spring and the autumn equinoxes, were marked by rites in which fire played a prominent part. In the Highlands of Scotland, so lately as the beginning of this century, on the 1st of May, or Beltane day—"the day of Baal's fire"—the boys of the towns assembled on a moor or open space, and made a round table of the green sod—the counterpart of an ancient altar—by digging a circular trench, and forming the earth thus obtained into a flat heap in the centre. A fire was then kindled near, and on this a custard was prepared, of eggs and milk, and also a cake of oatmeal, which was baked on a stone. After eating the custard, the cake was divided into equal portions, according to the number of the persons present. One of the pieces, however, was daubed with charcoal until perfectly black. All were presently put into a bonnet, from which each boy, after being blindfolded, drew one—the last falling to the share of him who held the bonnet. Whoever drew the black piece was regarded as marked out to be sacrificed to Baal, that the sun-god might be propitious in the season just opening, and multiply the fruits of the earth. The devoted boy was not put to death, however, but was required to leap three times through the fire. Baal in Gaelic means a globe; that is, the sun. In Perthshire there is a village called Tillie-beltane, the hill of the fire of Baal. Near it are the remains of a Druidical temple, and also a well. On the 1st of May a procession used to be formed, the members of which drank water from the well, and then marched nine times round it and the temple—doubtless the traditional equivalent of

The weak king had bent before a stronger will, and had calmly looked on while his priests were being slain, but the sterner nature of his wife was not so easily daunted. "The gods do so to me, and more also, if I make not thy

the circling dances of Baal worship, round the holy well, the altar, and the temple. Sir J. Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*.

Lieut. Conder, in the *Palestine Fund Statements*, 1881, pp. 80-84, furnishes some interesting facts respecting sun worship in Palestine. Jerome, he tells us, relates that the rites of Tammuz were celebrated at Bethlehem in his own time. The sacred cave there, for many years consecrated as the supposed birthplace of Christ, was, Lieut. Conder supposes, the "chapel," or secret cave "of Moloch;" such a cave playing an important part in sun worship. There is, indeed, always a sacred cave in connection with the traces of sun temples in Syria, as if the ancient idea had been that the sun issued from a cave at its return from the darkness of winter. The Accadian name for the winter solstice month is, indeed, "The Cavern of the Dawn." Temples of Ash-toreth and Chemosh stood on Mount Olivet in Solomon's time, and Lieut. C. recognises a trace of them in a cave or vault beneath a small sanctuary yet remaining on its top. At Bethel there is a curious circle of stones immediately north of the village, reminding one of the rude stone temples of our own country. Traces of a similar circle were found south-east of Jenin, with a rude stone monument which has every appearance of being an ancient altar. The tomb of Joseph is flanked by two pillar-like altars, on which sacrifices are still offered by fire. Even the Jews sacrifice articles by fire at the tomb of Bar Jochai, on the side of Jebel Jermûk, the highest mountain of central Galilee. A rude cromlech in that district is known as "The Stone of Blood." Many sacred stones occur, indeed, through the whole country. On Hermon, the great centre of sun worship, the remains of numerous sun temples have been found by Col. Warren. They all face the rising sun. At Tyre, on an isolated hillock, is a sacred building still called "The Beloved of Women," doubtless from Adonis or Melkarth. The inhabitants of northern Lebanon worship the sun, moon, and elements, even now. "It is not," adds Lieut. C., "too much to say, that every isolated, round, or conical mountain-top in Palestine was once a seat of sun-worship."

life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time," was her instant message to Elijah, on hearing what had happened. The prophet, in the inevitable excitement of the day, had apparently hoped that the triumph of Jehovah would extend from Carmel over the land. But Jezebel's relentless spirit showed him that, while she lived, idolatry would be safe. The revulsion of feeling was instant. A few hours ago, at the head of a vast multitude; the king recognising him as the prophet of God, and yielding up to him, as such, all authority for the time; his life was now in imminent danger. No refuge in all the wide borders of Palestine was safe from the infuriated Jezebel; he must flee beyond its limits. Hurrying south, therefore, with his attendant, the Phœnician widow's son, if Jewish tradition be right, he hastily crossed the country, and, passing through Judah, never rested till he found himself at Beersheba, eighty miles from Jezreel, as the crow flies. There he left his man behind, and set out alone into the waste region still farther south. The overpowering excitement of the last few days, and the fatigue of the rapid flight, had been too much even for his iron frame and strength of mind. Profound despondency had settled on his spirit, and he wandered over the dreary stretches of barren uplands, wishing only to die; for his hope of re-establishing the worship of Jehovah had seemingly failed. Like many a gallant spirit in the hour of dejection, he saw everything in the gloomiest light. The children of Israel had forsaken God's covenant, thrown down His altars, and slain His prophets with the sword. He alone was left, and even he had to flee for his life. But the God he so faithfully served was nigh at hand. He had lain down and fallen asleep under a solitary flowering broom—the special shrub of the desert ravines, where it grows to the

height of ten or twelve feet, and affords a thick and grateful shade.¹ Here, "as he lay and slept" a heavenly vision was twice vouchsafed him, and, waking, he found a cake of meal, baked on hot stones,² and a cruse of water; still the only requirements of a Bedouin. He now determined to go on to the holy mountain of Horeb, and forthwith set out. The distance in a direct line is about 170 miles from Beersheba, but wide detours may have been necessary. Forty days—nearly six weeks—were spent on the journey, during which, we read, he had no food, his strength being doubtless miraculously sustained.³

¹ *Land and Book*, p. 610. Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 360. Robinson's *Bib. Res.*, vol. i. p. 203. It is the "Retem" of the Arabs—the *Retama roetam* of botanists. 1 Kings xix. 5, the Heb. reads "one rotem tree."

■ 1 Kings xix. 6. *Sept.*

² In connection with Elijah's fast, the following paragraph is curious. I need not refer to the disputed case of Dr. Tanner.

"Harriet Duell died in Iowa on Sunday night after a voluntary fast of forty-seven days. She began her fast on the 23rd February. She was fifty-two years old, a hopeless invalid, and determined to end her life by starvation. For the first thirty-three days she did not take even water. After that she took a little water each day till the final one, but nothing else passed her lips. Her pulse on Sunday morning was imperceptible; her respiration thirty-five per minute. She was in full possession of her mental faculties until the last. The post-mortem examination showed that there was extremely little blood in her body. The stomach was void of all substance. The body weighed forty-seven pounds. She was never considered insane by her friends, but merely desperate through suffering."—*Daily News*, April, 1881.

Another case of fasting, for forty-five days—that of Mr. Griscom, of Chicago—has occurred since the above. "He lost during his fast $49\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. Tanner lost in forty days $36\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. On the first day his pulse was 84; temperature, 100. On the last day his pulse was 66; temperature, 98. He did not suffer at all save

In the secluded plain below the highest point of Jebel Mûsa, a cave is shown as that in which Elijah sought shelter for the night at Horeb. It was spoken of when the Book of Kings was written as "the cave;" but whether from the fame of the prophet's visit, or as well known before, it is impossible to say. That night another vision was granted him, and the question, divinely prompted, rose in his soul: "What doest thou here, Elijah; away from thy field of work, in this lonely sanctuary of the hills?" He pleaded in justification that he was, as he believed, the sole survivor in Israel of the servants of God, and that even his life was in peril. The Voice, however, directed him to leave the cavern on the morrow, and stand upon the mount, before the Lord, who would pass by.¹ Having done so, God revealed Himself, in all the terror of His most appalling manifestations.² A rushing hurricane, before which Elijah shrank once more into the depths of the cave, burst through the awful gorges of the mountains, tearing off huge granite fragments on every side. Then followed the crash of an earthquake, making the mighty peaks and summits rock and sway on their foundations, and after that the peals of an awful thunderstorm reverberated through the naked defiles; the incessant blaze of Eastern lightning flaming around, and revealing the heights and depths of the rocky wilderness. But Jehovah was in none of these. At last, in the silence almost peculiar to that region, broken by no falling stream, or note of bird,

on the thirty-seventh day, when the excessive heat caused nausea. He took an average of 32 ounces of water in the 24 hours. There is no doubt about the genuineness of the fast. He has been in charge of physicians."—*Daily News*, July 14, 1881.

¹ 1 Kings xix. 11. *Sept.* and *lit.* rendering of Hebrew.

² Exod. xxxiv. 6. *Grove's art. Elijah, Dict. of Bible.*

or sound of beast, or voice of man, came ‘ a still small voice.’” What it was is not told us, but Elijah at once felt that the decisive moment had arrived. Wrapping his face in his sheepskin mantle, and once more going out to the mouth of the cave, he stood, awestruck, to hear.¹ Once more the question is asked, “ What doest thou here, Elijah ? ” and once more the same answer is returned. Meanwhile he had learned a great lesson. Till now he had thought only of the more terrible attributes of Omnipotence in connection with God—the tempest, the earthquake, the lightnings of His wrath. But he had been taught that he was henceforth to recognise the gentler aspects of the Almighty—the still small voice—as His chosen symbol. He himself had hidden from the former, but had instinctively veiled his face before the latter. God was gentle and tender as well as just and stern. Work, not timid flight, was Elijah’s vocation, as it is that of all true men. Three commands were given him. Hazael was to be anointed king of Syria, instead of Benhadad; Jehu, the son of Nimshi, king of Israel instead of Ahab; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, was to be set apart as his own successor.² He was cheered, moreover, with the intimation, that though he thought himself the only servant of Jehovah left in Israel, there were still, unknown to him, but known to God, 7,000 who had not bowed the knee or kissed the hand to Baal. Through them, and the successor to his office, who would be raised up, the interests of the truth would be defended and promoted, from generation to generation, till He came, in whom the still small voice which would not strive or cry, or be heard in the streets, would lead the kingdom of God to final and eternal triumph.³

¹ *Elijah, Dict. of Bible.* Stanley’s *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 260.

² 1 Kings xix. 15–17.

³ Matt. xii. 19, 20.

The anointing of Hazael and Jehu was reserved for Elisha, the successor of Elijah, but the selection of Elisha himself was made by the great prophet. Leaving Horeb, in obedience to the Divine command, he passed up the Jordan valley, in all probability to escape notice by thus choosing the sunken route of the Ghor. His loneliness may have awakened a desire for companionship, now that he was growing old, and a friend was graciously provided. At Abel-Meholah—"the meadow of the dance"—a broader part of the Ghor, as Jerome informs us, ten miles south of Bethshean, there lived the local judge,¹ or Shaphat, a man, as his office implied, of solid position in the community. Like his neighbours, he farmed his land, and his son, Elisha, at the moment of Elijah's passing was actually ploughing. "Twelve yoke," it is said, "were before him,"—an expression which may either mean that twelve "yoke" of land, the yoke being as much as two oxen could plough in a day—were already ploughed, and he was busy with the last,² or that eleven ploughs were at work under his father's slaves, while he himself guided a twelfth. Elijah was apparently on the other side of the river, but passed over³ to him; or it may be he went only from the path into the field.⁴ Going up to Elisha, he threw over him his sheepskin mantle⁵—the recognised summons to the

¹ Shaphat=judge. It is the usual word for a "judge."

² Ewald thinks this, but Thenius and Keil fancy there were eleven ploughs besides that of Elisha. If so, the farm must have been a large one. See also *Land and Book*, p. 144.

³ Hebrew.

⁴ Grove supposes the former; Thenius the latter.

⁵ The Persian Sufis—Mahommedan priests—when in expectation of death, select a favourite pupil, and appoint him their successor by bequeathing him their cloak or other upper garment. Brahmins are invested with the priestly character by having a

prophetic office, as a son or disciple. As in the case in the gospel,¹ there was a moment's hesitation, but Elijah must have felt the sincerity of the request that followed, for he did not refuse to grant it. With him, as with our Lord, no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, was fit for the kingdom of God; yet there was no real looking back in Elisha's case, but simply the honest utterance of a dutiful heart. "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and mother, and I will follow thee."² "Go," said Elijah, "go back and do it: what I have done in no way conflicts with your performance of filial duty;³ but remember that thou art consecrated to God."⁴ Returning home, therefore, for the moment, he hastily bade his father's household farewell. Then, after offering the pair of oxen with which he had been ploughing, as a sacrifice of thanks and devotion to Him whose public servant he had now become, and making a parting feast of the flesh to his father's people, he left the well-to-do homestead behind, and followed Elijah; to be henceforth his "minister"⁵ or servant, and companion.

yellow mantle thrown across their shoulders, and bound round the waist by a sacred cord.

¹ Luke ix. 61.

² Hebrew.

³ *Keil*.

⁴ *Thenius*.

⁵ The same word as is used of Joshua in his relations to Moses. Exod. xxiv. 13. Of Abishag to David. 1 Kings i. 15. It is sometimes translated "servant." Exod. xxxiii. 11.





CHAPTER IV.

ISRAEL UNDER AHAB AND AHAZIAH.¹

B.C. 919-897 AND B.C. 897-895.

THE history of Elijah now, for a time, breaks off. Hiding somewhere, in security, from Ahab and Jezebel, he ceased to take a prominent part in the progress of events. After what he had seen on Carmel, Ahab may, also, perhaps, have intermitted his persecution of the servants of Jehovah, for we find the schools of the prophets flourishing in these years, without disturbance from without, at Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal. It may be the secret of this toleration lay in part, however, in the deterioration of the order itself, for we shall ere long find that only one of this great brotherhood—Micaiah, the son of Imlah²—remained firmly opposed to the House of Omri. But Ahab had had trouble enough with prophets to deal more gently even with one who always predicted evil in his case, and contented himself with keeping Micaiah in prison.³

Meanwhile political affairs had become overclouded. The king of Syria,⁴ Benhadad II., whose capital was

¹ ASSYRIAN KINGS.—Tiglath Adar II., B.C. 889-884. Assurnazirhabal, 883-859. Shalmaneser II., 858-823.

² 1 Kings xxii. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 8, 18, 26.

⁴ "Syria" was originally a contraction of "Assyria," and in its

Damascus, had rapidly become the most powerful monarch west of the Euphrates, and was head of a great confederacy of no fewer than thirty-two tributary kings, bound to serve him in war;¹ Hamath, on the Orontes, being the second State in the league. Followed by his vassals, he overran the territories of Ahab, apparently availing himself of the weakness that must have followed the drought and famine, and the confusion that reigned through the religious persecution. Large districts were speedily subdued, and Samaria itself so severely straitened that Ahab was forced to sue for peace. Benhadad, however, was over-confident in his arms, and proposed terms to which the inhabitants would not submit. Not only was all the silver and gold in the city demanded; the royal harem and the king's children must be surrendered. The poorer houses would be spared, but the palace and the residences of the courtiers were to be at Benhadad's mercy. Ahab, thoroughly overawed by the success and truculent harshness of his enemy, was ready to listen even to such humiliating terms, but the elders of the city and the mass of the people would not permit him. The Syrian was therefore told that the gold and silver, and even the wives and children, would be given up, but the houses of the nobles could not be plundered. A boastful reply to this, threatened the utter destruction of Samaria. The force attacking it would be so great that when its walls and houses were burnt to ashes, there would not be a handful for each of the soldiers assailing them. "Let not him who girds on his armour," replied Ahab spiritedly, "boast himself as he that putteth it

widest sense was equivalent to Aram—the whole vast region bounded by the great mountain chain of Taurus, and extending from Asia Minor in the north to the Euphrates on the east and Arabia on the south.

¹ 1 Kings xx. 1, 16.

off." Meanwhile, a prophet, with a courage worthy of his order, true to the national spirit, and faithful to God, encouraged the king, by assuring him that Benhadad would be defeated. By his directions the servants of the country chieftains who had fled into Samaria, and the men-at-arms then in the city—in all only about 7,000 combatants—were mustered, and sent out in a vigorous sally at noon, when they would be least expected. Troops had already been drawn out to storm the town, but Benhadad and his great men were enjoying themselves during the heat of the day by a carousal in the tents, or booths of branches and boughs, which had been extemporized for them, as is still the custom in Eastern campaigns. Word hurriedly sent, announcing the sally, could not rouse him from his debauch. Those who dared to attack him were to be taken alive and brought to his presence. An army thus led was, however, an easy prey to a fierce assault. Disconcerted by the vigour of the Israelites, the force detailed to storm the city turned and fled; and the panic spread so quickly through the whole army, that Benhadad barely escaped, on horseback, with some of his cavalry,¹ leaving his chariots and camp in the hands of Ahab.

Such a power as that of Damascus was not likely, however, to submit to a humiliating defeat. It was due, said the courtiers, to the God of Israel being a mountain God; had the battle been fought on the lowlands, the result would have been different. A new army exactly like that which had been dispersed was, therefore, raised, and marched into the great plain of Esdraelon in the opening of the fighting season, next year. The town of Aphek,² on Mount Gilboa, now the village of Fukū'a, lay in the rear; their wide array filling all the

¹ 1 Kings xx. 1-21.

² *Land and Book*, p. 388.

eastern end of the plain. But Ahab had been forewarned by a prophet that this new invasion would take place, and was prepared for it. Dividing his force in two, he kept them for seven days on the heights near at hand, waiting a favourable moment for attack. Compared with their assailants, they seemed on the mountain sides like two flocks of goats, while the invaders appeared to cover the country. But they were strong in the remembrance of their last year's victory, and, watching the right moment, swooped down on the Syrians with such vehemence as drove all before them. The slaughter was once more terrible, and Benhadad had again to flee. This time, however, he could get no farther than Aphek, which Ahab at once attacked. A vast number perished in the defence of the wall, which was at last carried and levelled with the ground;¹ if, indeed, it did not fall through an earthquake or by undermining. Benhadad himself fled from house to house as the victors pressed into the town, but at last had to plead, in his turn, for peace. Putting on sackcloth, and throwing rope halters round their necks,² his courtiers came humbly to the conqueror, craving for Benhadad that his life might be spared. It was one of the decisive moments on which the whole future of a country depends. An opportunity had been given to crush to the dust the threatening power of Syria. Honour, interest, policy, and respect for the national party and the prophets, alike urged Ahab

¹ The wall may have fallen by an earthquake, as some suppose, God sending it miraculously; though with such a man as Ahab in command of Israel, this could only be for the vindication of the Divine power. Ewald thinks the 27,000 perished in the ruins of the city; Thenius that the wall was undermined—a part of the enemy enticed to it, and that the walls then sank under their weight.

² In similar cases among the Turks, swords are hung from the halters. *A. u. N. Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 200.

to press his advantage to the uttermost. But his habitual weakness, incapacity, love of ease, aversion to the honourable cares and duties of his position, fear of pushing matters to extremity with so powerful a kingdom, and perhaps, also, the hope of securing a strong alliance against the Assyrians, who threatened the future of all Western Asia, turned the scales disastrously for Israel. Flattered by an appeal for his life from so powerful an enemy, he at once showed his weakness, asking if Benhadad were still alive, and calling him his brother. Emboldened by so favourable an omen, the envoy hastened to follow it up by an appeal to his brotherly sympathy. An invitation to bring the king followed, and, on his appearance, a place was given him in the royal chariot, beside Ahab. He was of course profuse in his offers of goodwill. He would give back the towns of Israel taken in the past by Syria, and would let Israel have bazaars in Damascus as the Syrians had had in Samaria.¹ A treaty of peace on this easy footing was forthwith made, and Benhadad allowed to return to Damascus, with his power and empire unimpaired—to laugh at the simplicity of his conqueror and to plan revenge.²

Such folly on Ahab's part met with a speedy rebuke.³ A prophet, wounded and bleeding, his face and head covered with his mantle, and strewn with ashes in token of profound grief, suddenly stood before him. Beginning a ready tale, he stated that while he had been in

¹ The expression is, to have "streets" in Damascus. This may be illustrated, perhaps, by the condition imposed on Constantinople by the Sultan Bajazet, that the Turks should have a street in that city in which they might live under their own judge, and retain their own religion and laws. Many Turks, as the result of this, forthwith came to live in Constantinople.

² 1 Kings xx. 24-34.

³ 1 Kings xx. 35-43.

the battle a captain had brought a prisoner to him, with the strictest orders, on pain of death or a heavy fine, not to let him escape. While the speaker, however, had been looking this way and that, the prisoner had fled. What was to be done? "You have yourself," replied Ahab, "pronounced the just judgment in your case." On this, throwing off the covering from his face, the prophet suddenly revealed himself, and told the king in ominous words that as he had suffered a man to escape whom Jehovah had devoted to utter destruction, his own life would be taken instead; his people also perishing for the Syrians whom he had let go free. The star of the house of Omri was sinking. Ahab returned to Samaria, indignant at the prophet and displeased with himself. But he soon forgot all in the presence of Jezebel.

A great change had meanwhile come in the affairs of Western Asia, involving the whole future of its various nations and states. Ever since the days of Solomon, the kingdom founded by the dynasty of Rezin at Damascus, had been the terrible and inveterate foe of Israel. In each reign Syrian wars had threatened or burst on the land, spreading distress and dismay. Now, however, a power which had once been supreme from the Tigris to the Mediterranean, but had for nearly two hundred years been crippled and harmless, again alarmed these wide regions by a display of fresh vigour and aggressive designs. Under Tiglath-pileser I., about B.C. 1100, the rule of Assyria had stretched from Kurdistan to the Grecian Archipelago, including the whole of Lebanon and Phenicia. But a strong league of the Hittite kings of Syria had effectually humbled it, and torn away from the successors of the great king all his dominions on this side of the Euphrates. To this had been due the possibility of the empire of David and Solomon, and

that of the Syrians at Damascus. Egypt, distracted by a struggle between the priestly kings of Thebes and the kings of the 21st dynasty, at Tanis, in the Delta, could not disturb Palestine or Western Asia by any attempt to avail themselves of the eclipse of Assyrian power, to regain the old conquests of Thothmes III., or Rameses II. Babylon, moreover, profited by the opportunity to strike for its ancient independence, throwing off the Assyrian yoke, and even taking possession of the districts south of Nineveh.

After a hundred and fifty years of obscurity, however, Assyria once more, in the middle of the ninth century B.C., under its warlike king, Assur-nazirhabal, entered on a career of conquest, and cleared its home territories of their Babylonish garrisons. He was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser II., who proved the Napoleon of his day. After conquering Babylonia, he marched in triumph to the shores of the Persian gulf, and exacted tribute from the petty kings of Chaldæa.¹ But these triumphs only kindled his military ardour. He now determined to extend his empire to the ancient grandeur it had obtained under Tiglath-pileser I. The kingdom of Damascus and the monarchies and states of Palestine were thus in imminent danger. A new era of mortal struggle for existence had come to them—a struggle only to end, after an agony of more than a hundred years, in the destruction of Damascus and Samaria, and the degrading vassalage of all the nations from the Tigris to the Levant. Henceforth all Western Asia trembled at the name of Assyria. The heavens were black with tempests, driving, with only momentary lulls, across the whole sweep of Syria and Palestine.

¹ Layard, *Inscrip.*, pl. 46, 47. *Western Asiatic Inscrip.*, III. pl. 7, 8.

Under these circumstances, the single hope of the countries threatened lay in their putting aside all mutual quarrels and uniting against Assyria. One important result of the inglorious peace of Ahab with Benhadad was, therefore, the adherence of the former to a league of the kings and princes of Palestine and Syria, under the supremacy of Benhadad, against Shalmaneser. Nor was the alliance long allowed to be merely formal. The king of Assyria, Shalmaneser II., eager to widen his empire, invaded Hamath, one of the States of the league, and all its forces were called out to resist him. An Assyrian inscription¹ informs us that Benhadad, as commander of the confederates, led into battle 1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalry, and 20,000 infantry of his own army; 700 chariots, 7,000 horse and 10,000 foot of Hamath; 2,000 chariots of Ahab and 10,000 foot; 500 foot soldiers of the Guites;² 1,000 Egyptians; 10 chariots and 10,000 infantry of Irkanat; 200 men of Arvad; 200 from Usanat; 30 chariots and 10,000 men of Sizan; 1,000 camels of Gindibah of Arba; and a contingent from the king of Ammon. "These twelve kings," says Shalmaneser, "brought help to one another, and came against me to war and battle. Through the high powers given me by Assur, the Lord, and the mighty weapons of the god Nergal who goes before me, I fought with them, and put them to rout from the city of Karkar to the city of Gilzan. I slew 14,000 of their armed men. Like the air-god Ben, I poured a flood over them. I filled the waters with them in their flight, and laid low all their armed host. The whole country was not enough to hold

¹ On the monolith found at Kurkh. Translated by Sayce. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. pp. 99, 100. Menant, *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 112.

² Unknown.

their dead bodies. I pursued them to the river Orontes, and captured on the way their chariots, their cavalry, and their baggage.¹ But the victory had been dearly bought, for Shalmaneser presently retreated.² Assyria had now, however, fairly entered on her policy of subduing Western Syria. One of its kings had invaded Phenicia twenty years before, and forced its cities to pay him tribute, and Shalmaneser was destined to attack Benhadad again three times in the eight years following his doubtful triumph on the Orontes.³

The chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah is hardly as yet quite settled. Ewald, Schenkel, Riehm,



HELMETS, AND STYLE OF WEARING THE HAIR IN THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

Conder, Winer, and Maspero alike give a date to Ahab which makes him fifty years earlier than Shalmaneser II., who, however, from the indisputable testimony of his inscriptions, fought against him.⁴

It must have been soon after this, and about four years before Ahab's death, that his last meeting with Elijah took place. On the eastern slope⁵ of the hill of Jezreel,

¹ Sayce, and Menant.

² Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 98.

³ Schrader, *ibid.*, p. 310. Menant gives the dates of his campaigns against Benhadad as B.C. 855, 851, 850, and 848. In each Shalmaneser, of course, claims the victory.

⁴ Schrader gives the date of Shalmaneser's reign as B.C. 858-824.

⁵ 2 Kings ix. 30-36; 1 Kings xxi. 1, 18.

close to the city wall, along which one side of the palace of Ahab ran,¹ was a vineyard which had been owned for generations by the family of one Naboth, a man of substance and position in the city. Disliking to see the ground of a private citizen so near, Ahab had determined to get possession of this if possible, that he might turn it into a garden of herbs. But Naboth, with the sturdy independence of a Jewish landowner, was unwilling to sell it; a religious scruple, perhaps, strengthening his objection to part with ground which he had inherited from his forefathers.² The rights of proprietors could not be lightly invaded. Omri had formally bought the hill of Samaria, and David the threshing-floor of Araunah. It seemed as if the king must yield, and to do so fretted his self-love and made him heavy and displeased. Like a petted child when crossed, he threw himself moodily on his bed and refused to eat.

If he, however, was cowed and beaten, Jezebel his wife was not. He had some scruples; she, none. That any one should dare to refuse to gratify the king was an

¹ 2 Kings ix. 30. It is a matter of dispute whether Naboth's vineyard was at Jezreel or at Samaria. He was a Jezreelite, and owned a piece of land on the eastern slope of the hill of Jezreel. 2 Kings ix. 25, 26. He also had a vineyard, of which the situation is uncertain. The Heb. text (1 Kings xxi. 1) states that it was in Jezreel; but the Sept. omits the words "which was in Jezreel," and instead of "the palace," reads "the threshing-floor of Ahab, King of Samaria." But a threshing-floor, translated in our version "void place"* (1 Kings xxii. 10), did actually exist before the gate of Samaria.

² Land was really held among the Hebrews in a strict entail for their posterity. Its alienation was forbidden by the law. Lev. xxv. 23.

* The word "gorān" occurs thirty-five times in the Old Testament, and is almost always translated "threshing-floor," or "floor."

insult to the throne. If Ahab really wanted the vineyard, she would get it for him. Writing a letter in his name, and duly authenticated by the royal seal, to the elders and chief men of Samaria, she commanded them to proclaim a fast, as at the occurrence of some great public calamity. High treason had been committed, and the wrath of the gods must be deprecated. Naboth was to be put at the head of the assembly,¹ and when thus brought into prominent notice, was to be accused as the criminal, by hired false witnesses, so common in all ages in the East. It was to be asserted that he had cursed God and the king. His only offence, of course, had been keeping his own property when Ahab wished him to sell it. Largely dependent on the court, and daunted by the fierce energy and unscrupulousness of Jezebel, the elders had not spirit to resist, and carried out her murderous plan. Naboth, having been charged with the crime, was at once condemned, and forthwith hurried outside the town walls by night and stoned to death, his sons also sharing his fate, for they too must be destroyed to secure the vineyard.² To add iniquity to the murders, the mangled bodies were left unburied, the greatest insult that could be paid to the dead. Worse still, the prowling dogs and swine³ of the town were allowed to devour them; and it was noticed that the blood ran into a tank at hand, which was the common bathing place of the prostitutes of the temple of Baal.⁴

The long seclusion of Elijah had apparently made Ahab almost forget him, or fancy that he was, at last, fortunately dead. But he found to his dismay that he was still alive. The news of Naboth's death had been brought to her husband at once by Jezebel; and though

¹ *Josephus.*

² 2 Kings ix. 26. Yesterday = yesternight.

³ *Sept.*

⁴ 1 Kings xxi. 19; xxii. 38. *Sept.*

he had not had the courage to commit the crime, he was willing enough to enjoy its results. Calling his chariot, therefore, he rode off to the vineyard, attended by two officers, Jehu and Bidkar, in a second chariot,¹ to take possession of his ill-gotten spoil. He had done so, and was riding cheerily home again, when the dreaded apparition of Elijah stopped the way. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" gasped the king. "I have found thee," replied the prophet, and proceeded to announce that his apostasy and crimes would be punished by the total destruction of his House. As to himself, moreover, the town dogs would lick up his blood in the same place as they had licked that of Naboth, and the temple prostitutes would wash themselves in it as they bathed in the tank.² Nor would Jezebel escape. The dogs would devour her under the wall of Jezreel, and her sons, sharing a similar fate, would be left to the dogs and the vultures.³ Appalled by such a curse, Ahab rode back to Samaria gloomy and alarmed. Rending his clothes, putting on rough sackcloth, and even sleeping in it; refusing food and bearing himself with broken contrition—only, however, too short-lived—the doom was held back for a generation.

The defeat of Benhadad in various contests with Assyria, had emboldened Ahab to break his league with him, after three years of peace; the surrender of Ramoth Gilead, one of the towns Syria had agreed to give back to Israel, being still deferred. He was now in the twenty-second year of his reign; his southern neighbour, Jehoshaphat, being four years his junior as king. The policy of Omri, begun with Asa, had been continued by their sons. Instead of war, the most friendly relations

¹ 2 Kings ix. 25.

¹ 1 Kings xxi. 19. *Sept.*

³ 1 Kings xxi. 24.

had been cultivated, though Jehoshaphat was as zealous for Jehovah as Ahab and Jezebel for Baal. The wish for mutual safety by union was undoubtedly the great motive for the alliance, but it was regarded with unfavourable eyes by the prophets and more thoughtful citizens of Judah.¹ A visit of the southern king to his northern brother was now, however, arranged ; and for the first time since the division of the monarchy, a king of Judah was a guest of a king of Israel. Delighted with this proof of confidence, Jehoshaphat's entrance to Samaria was celebrated by Ahab with great rejoicings and public festivities ; and the two appeared together from time to time, in state, before the people. Resolved to get possession of Ramoth, but afraid to undertake the campaign alone, Ahab felt that this royal visit was an excellent opportunity for securing help, and proposed that Jehoshaphat should join him ; nor did he feel free to refuse. The southern king, however, while ready to join in strict alliance with his brother of Israel, was too religious to think of acting without Divine sanction given through the prophets. No fewer than 400 having therefore been collected, a favourable answer was at once given by them to Ahab. Something, however, had roused the suspicions of Jehoshaphat ; for a courtly desire to stand well with the king had already corrupted the order to a large extent, and made their utterances false and misleading. One day, therefore, when both kings sat on their thrones in full armour,² at the open space outside the gate of Samaria,³ where the troops were mustered, the crowd of prophets was once more brought before them, but they only repeated the assurance of victory already given. One, indeed, went so far as to put on his forehead horns of

¹ 2 Chron. xx. 35.

² *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 538.

³ *Land and Book*, p. 27.

iron, and push, ox-like, with them, as a sign that Ahab, the bull of Ephraim, would drive the Syrians before him. Still Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. "Was there no other prophet of Jehovah?" There was only one, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, but he always prophesied evil of the king. To please Jehoshaphat, however, he was sent for, and brought from the prison into which Ahab had thrown him at an earlier date. But even he at first prophesied success. Yet it was evident he was not in earnest. He had refused to mould his answer to the king's wishes, or to speak otherwise than Jehovah dictated; and now, on being adjured to tell all his mind, delivered a gloomy foreboding of defeat and death. "I saw all Israel," said he, "scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have not a shepherd, and Jehovah said, These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace." Ahab's conviction that no good would be foretold to him was fulfilled; his death was predicted. Nor was this all. Micaiah added that he saw a vision in which the spirit that leads men astray had come from before God to entice Ahab to his ruin, and that it had entered into the 400 prophets for this end. Infuriated at such an exposure, Zedekiah, the prophet who had pretended to gore those round him with the iron horns, struck Micaiah on the cheek, asking him, as he did so, how he durst say that the spirit of true prophecy had departed from him and been given to himself. The striker was the court favourite; the prophet struck, a man despised and maltreated; but he sternly answered that the proof would be seen when Zedekiah, after the victory of the Syrians, would eagerly hide in an inner chamber to escape. Unpleasant truth is ever more unwelcome, however, than flattering falsehood, and Micaiah was instantly handed over again to the governor of the city and the official in charge of

prisoners, Joash, the king's son—with orders to give him only bread and water, and that as sparingly as would keep him alive,¹ till the king should return in peace. "If ever you return in peace," retorted Micaiah, as they led him off, "Jehovah has not spoken by me."

But the gloomy prediction proved only too true. The march of the allied armies of Israel and Judah forthwith began, and they soon came up with the Syrian forces. Resolved to avenge himself for his humiliation by Ahab, Benhadad had given orders to his chariot officers to make straight for him in the battle, and be sure, above all things, of killing him or taking him alive. The struggle took place outside Ramoth Gilead; but Ahab, having apparently learned the design of the enemy, disguised himself before entering the battle. Jehoshaphat had retained his kingly armour and ornaments, but his death would have provoked a permanent feud with Judah which Benhadad wished to avoid. When, therefore, his chariot force had surrounded the only figure they saw that seemed like Ahab's, it was enough that Jehoshaphat called his name aloud to have his pursuers turn aside. But no disguise could avail the doomed king of Israel. A chance arrow, fired without an aim, struck him between the breast and the lower plates of his armour, sinking deep into his body. He would not, however, yield. Stanching the blood as he best could, he resolutely held himself up in his chariot during the battle, lest his disappearance should dispirit his men. But the flow of blood went on apace, till there was a pool in the hollow of the chariot, and at last, as evening approached, he swooned and died. He had been nobler in death than at any moment in his life.

With Ahab's death, the war was at once virtually ended.

¹ Hebrew. 1 Kings xxii. 27.

As the sun set, and the news ran through the host, a cry rose, "Every man to his own city and his own place!" and the army forthwith melted away. The corpse, brought back to Samaria, was duly buried in the royal tomb. Micaiah had been vindicated. Nor had the words of Elijah fallen to the ground. The chariot was taken to the town pool, the blood dripping from it and from the armour as they were being cleansed, and running back into the tank. Such a sight was naturally long remembered, and men told their sons how the dogs were noticed licking up the dead king's blood, and how, when the temple courtesans shamelessly bathed in the pool next morning, its waters were still tinged with red.

Ahab was peaceably succeeded by his son Ahaziah, the first case in the northern kingdom of the third generation of a dynasty ascending the throne. Able and enterprising, the new sovereign might have left his mark in history but for his untimely end, after a reign of only two years. The death of his father at Ramoth Gilead had left the whole country east of the Jordan at the mercy of the Syrians, and had so weakened his hold on Moab that it refused to pay any longer the yearly tribute of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams, with their wool, which had been exacted from it for fully eighty years.¹ Details of a period so remote very rarely survive;² but, fortunately, the discovery of the Moabite Stone in recent years has thrown a light as interesting as it was unexpected on this passage of history.

The name of the king of Moab at this time, as we learn both from the Moabite relic and from the Bible, was Mesha. His father, he tells us, had reigned thirty years, and had paid the tribute exacted from him by

¹ 2 Kings iii. 4, 5.

² About B.C. 890. *Ginsburg*.

Israel. The country, though not so large as the county of Huntingdon,¹ was so prosperous that its half-nomadic shepherd population had not only borne this enormous tax—thanks to the rich upland pastures of the Mishor—but had accumulated great wealth, as shown by the immense plunder seized by Jehoshaphat a few years later, after their defeat at Berachah.² The impost, however, must nevertheless have been alike burdensome and galling; even Mesha himself, as the greatest sheep-master of Moab, having doubtless to pay heavily from the crown flocks. The crisis in Israel at the death of Ahab was therefore seized as a favourable moment to strike for independence.

The story of this old-world struggle, as disclosed by the Moabite Stone, is intensely interesting.³ At the accession of Mesha, an Israelite garrison lay hardly a day's march from Korcha, the northern capital of Moab. It had formerly been posted by Omri in Medeba; but latterly, it would seem, had been removed to Ataroth, and had for its duty, to see that the tribute was duly paid. On the south, the mountaineers of Edom, now dependent on Jehoshaphat and acting with him as an ally of Israel, had seized the Moabite town of Horonaim, and harassed the whole country from that point. At last, however, the oracle of Chemosh had announced that the god would be gracious to his people and temple, and would utterly destroy Israel, their oppressor, and for a time it looked as if the prediction would come true.

¹ *Moab*, in *Dict. of the Bible*. Mesha was a "Dibonite." See Josh. xiii. 9. His father; he tells us, reigned 30 years.

² 2 Chron. xx. 25.

³ See Essay of Schlottman, in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1871, pp. 571 ff. Translation by MM. Clermont Ganneau and E. Renan. *Notice des Monuments, etc., Conservés au Musée du Louvre*. Paris, 1879. Translation of Ginsburg, London, 1871.

"Then," says the Stone, "rose Omri, king of Israel,

And oppressed Moab many days;

For Chemosh was wroth with his land.

And Omri's son followed, and he also said:

'I will oppress Moab.'

In my days [those of Mesha] spoke Chemosh:¹

'I will once more look favourably² on Moab and its temple,

And Israel will perish for ever.'³

And Omri seized the district of Medeba,

And Israel held it in his days and in those of his son forty years.

But Chemosh looked graciously on Moab in my days."⁴

With Ahab's death, the whole district north of the Arnon, claimed from the time of Joshua's conquest by Moab, had passed into Mesha's hands, and the confusion in the northern Hebrew kingdom emboldened him to proclaim his independence of Ahaziah, Ahab's successor. So rich a territory and so heavy a tribute were not, however, to be lightly surrendered, and the opening of the new reign was marked by a campaign to recover the one and enforce the other. From some unknown cause, this failed. Meanwhile, the Edomites were driven from the south, and Mesha, in the fulness of his heart at his triumph, built a high place⁵ in Korcha, to Chemosh, the national god, who, as he believed, "had delivered him from all his enemies, and had let him see his desire on all them that hated him."⁶

Ahaziah returned to Samaria full, no doubt, of plans for the further prosecution of the war, but Providence

¹ "I (Ahab) will oppress Moab in my days. I will lord over it and humiliate it—its king and his house. But Israel was ruined, ruined for ever." *C. G. and R.*

² "I (Ahab) will see my desire on." *G.*

³ "Israel (said) I shall destroy it." *G.*

⁴ "But Chemosh has caused him to perish in my time." *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁵ "Erected this stone of salvation." *Ginsburg.* See 1 Sam. vii. 12; Ps. cxviii. 7.

⁶ Moabite Stone.

had another fate in store for him. The upper windows of Eastern houses often project one or two feet, to form a pleasant look-out and a quiet lounge, a seat running along inside the lattice which serves instead of glass in so hot a climate. While resting on this couch, Ahaziah, by some misadventure—perhaps by inadvertently leaning against the lattice when it was not fastened—fell out into the street below, and was picked up only to be carried to his bed, whence he never rose. Anxious to live, however, but trained by his mother Jezebel in the worship of Baal only, he wearied to know what was before him, and fancied he might do so by inquiring of the oracle of a famous local god. A deputation was therefore sent to the shrine of Baalzebub, a Philistine god, at Ekron, on the Maritime Plain, forty miles south-west from Samària, in a straight line over the hills. The name, since New Testament times, has been used as that of “the prince of the devils,”¹ but was venerated in Ahaziah’s day as connected with an oracle specially in repute for its prophetic powers; Baalzebub himself being worshipped either as the averter of insect plagues, such as flies and locusts, so hurtful in the East, or possibly in the form of a huge fly, or of the scarabæus beetle, sacred among the Egyptians.² The Scripture narrative informs us, however, of the ignominious end of this mission, to rebuke which Elijah reappeared for almost the last time. The repeated efforts of Ahaziah to arrest him; the lightning terrors by which, once and again, he was saved; his final journey to Samaria with the awed soldiers, sent a third time to Carmel to secure him; his stern intimation to Ahaziah, face to face, that as a punishment for having slighted Jehovah, and consulted a Philistine

¹ Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24, 27. Lenormant’s *Divination*, p. 95.

² *Beelzebub*, in Herzog and Winer. See vol. ii. pp. 142–3; vol. iii. p. 356.

idol, he would certainly die, are in striking harmony with all his previous life; the enemy of the house of Ahab, the prophet of judgment, the man of mysterious appearances and vanishing.¹

The Moabite Stone has some allusions to Ahaziah's campaign. Encouraged by the promise of the oracle, Mesha fortified the town of Baalmeon, a few hours north of his capital, Korcha, and from this stronghold attacked Ataroth, which lay two hours south-west, and Nebo, which was about the same distance to the north-west; these towns being the bulwarks of the Hebrew power north of the Arnon. Both fell before Mesha's soldiers, and all the population were put to death in honour of Chemosh. It was this incident, especially, which had roused Ahaziah and led to his march across the Jordan, where he fortified himself in Jahaz, a few hours from Korcha. His further action was, however, in some way checked, perhaps by a sudden attack of the Syrians, and he was compelled to withdraw. Mesha now, as he thought by the aid of Chemosh, took possession of Jahaz, and the task of freeing the country was complete.

"I fortified Baalmeon," says he, "and made ditches round it. And I built the town Kirjathaim. And men of Gad had lived for generations in the district of Ataroth, and the king of Israel had fortified the town. And I fought against the town, and took it, and put to death all the men of the town, to please Chemosh, the god of Moab. And I took thence the sacred vessels of Jehovah, and offered them² before the face of Chemosh, in Kirjath. And I put men from Schiran and Schararath³ into it, to live in it.

¹ 2 Kings i. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1837, p. 912.

² "Dragged them on the earth." *Ganneau and Renan*.

³ "Saron and Maharonth." *Ganneau and Renan*.

“And Chemosh said to me: Go up; take the town Nebo from Israel. And I went up during the night, and fought against it from the dawn of the morning red to noonday, and took it, and put to death¹ all its population—seven princes of tribes . . . women and maidens. For I devoted them to Ashtar² Chemosh. And I took thence the sacred vessels of Jehovah, and offered them³ before Chemosh. And the king of Israel had fortified Jahaz, and occupied it, and fought with me; but Chemosh drove him from before my face. And I took out of Moab 200 men in all, and I besieged⁴ Jahaz, and took it, uniting it with Dibon.”

Mesha next recounts the buildings which he erected, beginning with those in Korcha. He took measures to strengthen its walls, gates, and towers; adorned it with a royal palace;⁵ and made new reservoirs to provide it with water in case of a siege; requiring, besides, that the inhabitants should have private cisterns of their own.⁶ He appears, moreover, to have driven out of Korcha all the hated Israelites who had previously lived in it, refusing them permission to remain there any longer. Other towns, all north of the Arnon, also received embellishment at his hands. “I built Aroer and made a military road along (the north side of) the Arnon.⁷ I

¹ There is a gap here in the translation of Schlottman. As deciphered since, Ganneau, Renan and Ginsburg translate the passage, “In all seven thousand men, (but I did not kill) their wives and the free women and the slaves.” ² Male counterpart of Astarte.

³ “Dragged them on the earth.” *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁴ “Went up to.” *G. and R.* “All its poor, and placed them in.” *G.*

⁵ Add, “and constructed dungeons in it.” *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁶ “And I dug watercourses to supply Korcha (by the labour of the captives) of Israel.” *Ganneau and Renan.*

⁷ Add, “I built Beth Bamoth—the house of the high places—which was destroyed.” *Ganneau and Renan.*

built Bezer—for fifty men of Dibon had attacked it—all Dibon was subject to me—and I set people in Bikran, and added it to my country.¹ And I built . . . and the temple of Diblathaim and the temple of Baalmeon, and brought thither (the image of) Chemosh.”² Thus he had border feuds to settle where the Hebrews and Moabites were near each other; and temple building was natural for one who fancied himself so favoured by his god.

Mesha seems to have resolved to erect his high place to Chemosh at Korcha soon after the taking of Jahaz, having no doubt vowed that he would do so if victory were granted him. Such a sanctuary included various chambers for the altar, the holy vessels, etc., though it was not properly a temple.

This done, he appears to have headed the alliance of the united chiefs of Moab and of the Mehunim—roving Edomite mountaineers—with a band of Ammonites, to invade Judah.³ They had reached the oasis of Engedi, halfway up the west coast of the Dead Sea, having gone round its south end, before news of the inroad reached Jerusalem. The cliff of Ziz, at Engedi, once surmounted, they would be on the tableland which stretches to Jerusalem in a succession of stony hills and waterless ravines, under the names of the wildernesses of Jeruel, and, near Bethlehem, of Tekoa. In his extremity, Jehoshaphat, true to his office as only the vicerent for God, instantly proclaimed a public fast and humiliation, and himself, in the midst of the congregation assembled

¹ “And I added no fewer than a hundred towns to the territory of Moab.” *Ganneau and Renan*.

² Add, “and Chemosh said, Descend and fight against Horonaim” (Edom). *G. and R.* (“And I assaulted and took it for”) Chemosh (restored it) in my days.” *G.* ³ 2 Chron. xx. 1, 2.

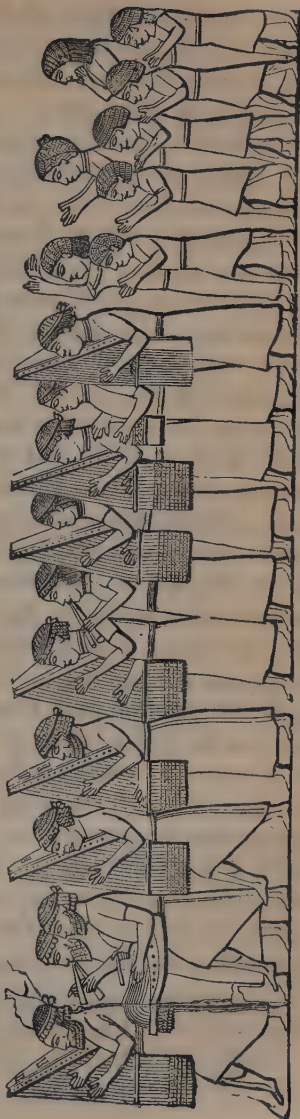
in the temple, implored help from their invisible and Almighty King. Such an example must have kindled and fed a lofty enthusiasm, which of itself would be an assurance of victory. A prophet, moreover, announced to the people that Jehovah was with them and would protect them. Meanwhile the enemy had reached Tekoa, and was thus only a few hours distant from the capital. There, however, providentially for Judah, a bitter dispute rose among them; the Moabites, with their related race, the Ammonites, falling on the Edomites, who resisted fiercely, but were ultimately cut down, as for some cause, devoted and accursed.¹ They may have been suspected of misleading their allies, for from this time the treachery of Edom became proverbial. Or perhaps the battle and massacre rose from an outburst of religious fanaticism, for Moab and Ammon had a form of heathenism essentially identical, while Edom seems to have clung to a comparatively purer faith. As the result, however, the Moabites, weakened by the conflict, hastily returned home, apparently in a panic, so that Jehoshaphat, when he approached with his troops, found only the deserted camp and a vast number of slain, with so prodigious a booty of silver and gold, rich robes, and costly vessels and jewels, that three days were spent in collecting it. Mesha, proud of his past successes, and trusting to the oracle of Chemosh, had hoped to take Jerusalem itself, but he had only drawn down a catastrophe which was the first step to his ruin. Jehoshaphat had marched out with a choir of Levites in their white robes chanting the ancient doxology of David—Praise Jehovah: His mercy endureth for ever²—to rouse the ardour of the host. His return was marked by equal jubilation. Such a deliverance moved all classes of the population. The temple

¹ 2 Chron. xx. 23.² 1 Chron. xvi. 34.

once more resounded with psalteries and harps and trumpets, mingling with hymns of triumphant praise of Him who had so visibly appeared to help the nation. Nor did the nobler spirits of the time fail to contribute their share to the universal rejoicing. The forty-seventh and fifty-eighth psalms are believed to commemorate the great victory, and may have been sung as a *Te Deum* at the great public thanksgiving on account of it.

This incident seems to have taken place during the short reign of Ahaziah, who, having no son, was succeeded by his brother, Joram; like himself, a man of ability and energetic activity; eager to follow up

¹ The instruments comprise harps played by hand: a dulcimer, played by percussion and by the hand; double flutes and a kind of drum. The music is accompanied by the hands and voices of women and children, led by an eunuch. Six of the men, in all, are eunuchs. The first three figures have one leg raised, as if dancing to their music.



A BAND OF SINGERS AND MUSICIANS, ASSYRIA.¹

the quarrel with Moab, while weakened by her recent disaster. Jehoshaphat, who had still four years to reign, was now a man of about 55, and had apparently associated his son Jehoram with him on the throne,¹ to lighten his own duties in his advancing years. The two courts of Judah and Israel, always friendly during Jehoshaphat's reign, were, meanwhile, more so than ever, for one result of the ill-omened visit to Samaria had been the marriage of Jehoram, his son, to Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel; the inheritress, as it proved, of all the worst qualities of her mother. Joram of Samaria, therefore, easily secured the help of Judah in the further prosecution of the war with Mesha. To make victory certain, a levy of all the available fighting men of Israel was made; and the vassal king of Edom was required by Jehoshaphat to join the expedition with his forces. Marching south to Jerusalem, Joram was joined by the foot and horse of Judah—for cavalry and chariots had been permanently in use since the days of Solomon—and the united armies advanced towards Moab, by the southern route, to meet the contingent from Edom, and to pass along the edge of its territory round the south end of the Dead Sea. Seven days of painful and slow stages had brought them apparently to the Wady el Ahsa, the brook Zered of the wilderness life, marking the boundary between Edom and Moab.² Usually retaining some water, even in the heat of summer, it was now dry, and the army and its cattle were alike suffering greatly from thirst. Meanwhile, Mesha had gathered all the strength of Moab, from the youngest able to bear the sword girdle,³ and was close at hand. In this extremity the confederates were saved

¹ This is the general opinion.

² See 2 Kings iii. 21; xxii. 20.

³ 2 Kings iii. 21.

by the prophetic counsels of Elisha, who had accompanied Joram of Samaria, and was consulted by Jehoshaphat. By his directions a number of pits were dug in the bottom of the wady where they found themselves, to catch and retain the water which, he told them, would presently rush down from the highlands of Moab ; though they should neither see wind nor rain, the storm breaking at too great a distance. Nor were they disappointed, for through the night the prediction was fulfilled.

Mesha and all the fighting power of Moab had, meanwhile, advanced to their boundary, and lay encamped, ready to repel the invasion, probably on the outer slopes of the hills which run along the south of Moab, overlooking the waste to the east.¹ Watching here during the night, they were astir with the first light. But when the sun rose suddenly, as it does in the East, with hardly any twilight, its level beams, red with the morning mists, revealed no enemy, but shone with a blood-red glare on the line of pools in the wady, dug on the preceding evening. No water having existed there before, the appearance was inexplicable, except on the supposition that the confederates had quarrelled, and had destroyed each other, as they themselves had done in their own invasion of Judah. The pools must be the blood of the slain ; the survivors had fled, and the deserted camp invited pillage. The cry rose therefore, " Moab to the spoil ! " ² and the host in tumultuous confusion, each eager only to outstrip the other and gain most booty, rushed from the heights. A few moments and their mistake flashed on them but too vividly. Instead of empty tents, they found a vigorous army ready to assail them. Helpless as sheep, they could only turn and flee ; their swift-footed enemies pressing remorselessly behind. All power of resistance in the

¹ *Moab, Dict. of Bible.*

² 2 Kings iii. 23.

field was swept away. On rolled the flood of invasion, carrying ruin and death far and near. According to the barbarous custom of antiquity, town after town, open or fortified, was levelled with the ground; the rich farms and vineyards buried under showers of stones, every soldier, as he passed, helping the desolation; all the wells and cisterns, the fountains of life in a hot country, filled up, and every fruit or timber tree cut down. "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."¹ Nothing escaped.

A last despairing stand was made at Kir-haraseth, now known as Kerak, a town almost impregnable by its position. It stands on an isolated triangular plateau of from 800 to 1,000 yards on each face; 3,720 feet above the sea, amidst heights still loftier, from which it is cut off on all points except one. Wadys from 1,000 to 1,350 feet deep, with precipitous sides, isolate it on the north and south, and a shallower ravine skirts its third side. The whole triangle has formerly been surrounded by a strong wall, and the rock is scarped a good way down. To an enemy, Kerak would be utterly inaccessible, except by winding paths on the west and north-west; and it could be entered only at two points, on the north-west and on the south, by dark tunnels, cut for forty paces through the rock. Huge ditches hewn out in the solid rock protect the weaker points; though these may be of later origin.²

¹ Joel ii. 3.

² Tristram's *Land of Moab*, pp. 70 ff. *Kir-Moab*, in *Riehm*, etc., etc. In the article *Kir-Moab*, in *Riehm*, the meaning of Kir-haraseth is given as "Potter's Town"—the head quarters of the pottery manufacture of Moab. Prof. Palmer, however, explains it as meaning the "city of the hill." *Pal. Fund Report*, 1881, p. 26.

This last stronghold the confederates now invested, with the intention of destroying it by famine, since they could not hope to take it by direct attack. Meanwhile, the amphitheatre of heights around enabled them to harass it by a constant fire of stones from the Benjamite slingers, and perhaps from the catapults which came into general use in sieges, under Uzziah.¹ Unable at last to endure this persistent annoyance, Mesha resolved on a desperate sally at the head of a forlorn hope of 700 swordsmen. The point chosen was that beleaguered by the Edomites, the specially hated foes of Moab, but the attempt to break through was defeated, and the king had to retire again into his citadel. It seemed as if Chemosh had deserted him, and was wroth, for some cause, with Moab. One hope of propitiating him and regaining his favour remained. Balak, centuries before, had had the same thought when sore pressed by Joshua, but had been held back from his purpose by Balaam. He would offer up, as a human sacrifice, his firstborn son, the heir apparent to the throne, and thus make the most terrible atonement which a country could offer to appease its offended god. Acting on this dreadful resolution, the king, and his son, were seen by the besiegers to mount the wall, attended by the priests of Chemosh. To the horror of all who lined the surrounding hills, with the city lying in full view below, an altar was now raised, and the lad handed over to the priests, by whom he was openly put to death, and then offered as a burnt sacrifice, to win, if possible, the heart of the god, from whom not even such an offering had been withheld.² The awful tragedy, indeed, accomplished its end, but by a means Mesha could not have foreseen, and with which Chemosh had nothing to do. The sight filled the besieging army with horror. Such sacrifices,

¹ 2 Chron. xxvi. 15.

² 2 Kings iii. 26.

in the opinion of the Hebrews, polluted a land and laid it under a curse of blood.¹ They would no longer stay in it, but would rather give up all they had won. To remain might bring on them the wrath which must speedily break forth for a deed so appalling. The camp therefore was broken up, and Mesha left unsubdued. But such a deliverance, effected apparently by the death of the prince, however clearly understood in Israel, might readily confirm Moab in its cruel idolatry.²

The prosperity of Judah, under Jehoshaphat, suffered no diminution as his reign drew to an end. Dignified, energetic, and true to a lofty public morality, as embodied in the ancient faith of Israel, he continued to attract the increasing respect of the neighbouring peoples. The Philistines willingly paid tribute, and Edom, as far as the eastern side of the Red Sea, had long been subdued. Ere his reign closed an attempt had even been made to reopen the sea-commerce with Ophir and other Indian ports, and a fleet of Indiamen had been built at Solomon's old port, Ezion-geber. But a storm had dashed them on the rocks before they set sail, and the enterprise was abandoned. It is noteworthy, however, that there is no mention of help being needed from Tyre in building them, as in the case of Solomon's ships, and that Jehoshaphat felt strong enough to decline overtures from Ahaziah to join him in the undertaking.³ His death, after a reign of twenty-five years, was a great calamity for his country.

The last years of Jehoshaphat were marked by the close of the great work of Elijah. Elisha had been

¹ Ps. cvi. 37-39.

² I have adopted the explanation of the words, 'And there was great indignation against Israel,' 2 Kings iii. 27, given by Bähr.

³ 2 Chron. xx. 36, 37.

appointed his successor, and the tired and worn soldier of God was to be allowed to enter on his reward. Only one glimpse of him is given us after the death of Ahaziah, till his translation. Jehoram of Judah had been associated with his father on the throne,¹ but had already shown the sad result of his marriage with the daughter of Jezebel. Turning from the example of his father to that of his wife, he "began to walk in the ways of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab, and to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah."² Elijah had confined his activities to the northern kingdom; Judah, under kings like Asa and Jehoshaphat, needing no such prophet of wrath. But now that the seeds of future heathenism were being sown by Athaliah, working through her husband, he felt impelled to send Jehoram a writing denouncing his evil course and predicting his death. It is the only instance we have of his committing his prophecies to writing.³

The narrative of his translation leads us to a district hitherto unconnected with his public life. He had shown himself, till now, so far as we know, only in the neighbourhood of the northern capital,—at Carmel, Jezreel, or Samaria. Now, however, he seems to have set out with his attendant Elisha, on a visit to the various

¹ 2 Kings viii. 16.

² 2 Chron. xxi. 12-15.

³ According to the Old Test. chronology Elijah was still alive when Jehoram reigned in Judah, and it is in itself likely that he denounced his sinful course. The mention of a letter or writing from the prophet to him is startling from the fact that, as said above, it is the only instance in which Elijah is mentioned as embodying his words in writing. It is recorded in the Book of Chronicles, which is of a comparatively late date; but there is no improbability that even a spoken prophecy may have been put in writing in the schools of the prophets, and sent to Jerusalem. See *Thenius*, in loc.

schools of the prophets in the south; to rouse them by his words and presence, to the old fidelity, from which, in too many cases, the order was fast sinking. The intimation of his approaching departure came to him at Gilgal; not the place of that name in the Ghor of the Jordan, but the present village of Jeljilia, north of Bethel.¹ As his mysterious change approached, the love of solitude seems to have returned to him, or, perhaps, he wished to escape the sorrow of parting with his friend. He therefore sought to be let go on alone to Bethel, whither he had been sent. But true love cannot forsake its object while neighbourhood is possible. "As Jehovah liveth," said Elisha, "and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At Bethel the great secret had become known, probably by prophetic intimation, but the faithful attendant will not let it be mentioned; he knows it only too well, already. Thence they journey down to Jericho, and there the same question finds a similar answer. Elijah finally sought to leave Elisha behind, by telling him that God had sent him on to the Jordan; but nothing could keep back a heart so true. At last the two stood on the edge of the river, fifty of the sons of the prophets looking wistfully after them from a distance, to see the end. The sheepskin mantle now became the counterpart of the rod of Moses. Taking it off, and rolling it together, Elijah smote the waters, and "they divided hither and thither, so that the two went over on dry ground." The aged prophet was once more among his native hills, in the free air of the wilderness which he loved so well. He has only, further, to ask Elisha what he can do for him before he be taken away,

¹ *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Elijah*. They certainly could not "go down" to Bethel from the Gilgal of the Jordan (2 Kings ii 3); but the other Gilgal is higher than Bethel. *Conder*.

"Let a firstborn son's double portion¹ of thy spirit be upon me," was the answer. "Thou hast asked a hard thing," replied Elijah, "but thou shalt have it, if thou seest me taken from thee." Conversing thus, the two went on together into the bosom of the hills, "And it came to pass that, as they talked, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Overwhelmed with sorrow at his sudden departure, the only thought of Elisha, for the moment, was his own grief. Uttering a bitter cry,² "My father, my father, thou art the chariot of Israel; thou hast been its horsemen," he gazed after him, rending his clothes in his sadness. Presently there fell from Elijah the mantle by which he had been so well known,³ and then he vanished from human sight, till that night when he appeared once more with Moses on the Hill of Transfiguration, speaking with Our Lord of the death presently to be accomplished at Jerusalem. But the gift of the mantle had answered the prayer of his servant: henceforth Elisha had the fulness of his spirit for which he had asked.

Thus ended the grand career of the greatest of the prophets since Moses. Yet his work remained, though he had entered on his glory, for from his life dates that reaction which kindled the zeal of his brethren in succeeding generations, and prepared the way for Him in whom all prophecy was fulfilled.

¹ Deut. xxi. 17. 2 Kings ii. 9, *Heb.*

² The word used is employed for the "great and bitter cry" at the destruction of the first-born in Egypt.

³ *Land and Book*, p. 118.



CHAPTER V.

THE PROPHET ELISHA.

ISRAEL.

JORAM, B.C. 895-883.

JUDAH.

JEHORAM, B.C. 893-883.

AHAZIAH „ 885-883.

ELISHA, c. B.C. 900-835.

THE appointment of Elisha as the “son” or special disciple of Elijah, appears to have been made seven or eight years before the translation of the elder prophet. A long training was needed for the destined successor of such a man, nor was it fitting that he should come into prominent notice till his master had passed away.

Elijah had been the prophet of wrath and judgment: Elisha came with a gentler mission. The times had in some measure changed. The worship of Baal was no longer in exclusive favour at court. Joram, Ahab's son and successor, at least tolerated that of Jehovah, though in association with the calf symbols of Bethel and Dan.¹ In after years, under the inspiration of Jezebel, the evil genius of his House, he was to restore Baal worship to its old pre-eminence, but, for the time, the work of Elijah had been accomplished, and his sternness might with advantage be laid aside. The thunders and lightnings of Horeb had done their part; men could now listen to the still small voice.

¹ 2 Kings iii. 2.

Identical in their zeal for God; Elijah and Elisha were, nevertheless, in many respects, very different men. The former had been a child of the wilderness, dwelling far from the abodes of men. The solitudes of Cherith or Carmel had been his home. He had shunned intercourse with his fellows, and fled from the artificial life of a town. The free air of the desert had been his vital element; the wild broom of its wadys his shade; the awful wilderness



MOUNT CARMEL AND THE PLAIN OF ACRE.

of Sinai his chosen retreat in the supreme hour of despondency. Driven to seek help in the time of famine and persecution, he had sought and found it at a distance from Israel, in the stricken home of a poor and unknown heathen widow.

Elisha was a man of the city; fond of its streets and crowds. Returning from the translation of his master, he had first revisited the schools of the prophets at

Jericho and Bethel,¹ to quicken their zeal, and formally take them under his care. A temporary retirement to the Carmel hills, the favourite haunt of Elijah, had followed. Like John the Baptist, or St. Paul, or Luther, he drew apart from men for a time, to gird his spirit to the great work before him. But this over, he returned permanently to the homes and everyday life of his people. Samaria became his residence for many years. He had a house of his own within the town walls, at the foot of the hill.² From this centre a wide apostolate was carried on, for well nigh fifty years, in every direction. Like Samuel, he seems to have made "circuits" over the whole country; rousing and instructing the people at large. So "continually" did he pass by Shunem, the present village of Salem, twenty-five miles north of Samaria, in the great plain of Esdraelon, that a rich lady there, prepared a special chamber for his accommodation at successive visits. We may often follow him thither, over the endless hills of northern Ephraim, past Engannim, the Spring of the Gardens; over the dark soil of the plain; through Jezreel, with the palace of Jezebel, to the hills three miles north, at the foot of which the Philistines had encamped just before the battle of Gilboa.³ Nain and Endor lay on the other side of the height. It was almost his second home; for his hostess, living in country profusion, had given up to his use the roof-chamber or aliyeh, so much esteemed in the East,—cool, airy, retired; furnished in keeping with his simple habits; a bed, a table, a seat, and a lamp with its stand, all it contained.⁴ He is not unfrequently at Carmel and Dothan,

¹ 2 Kings ii. 18, 23.

² 2 Kings ii. 25; v. 3, 9; vi. 32 f.; xiii. 14.

³ 1 Sam. xxviii. 4.

⁴ 2 Kings iv. 8, 10. Furrer speaks of the simple and hearty

with shorter or longer residence at each;¹ but we find him, also, at Gilgal, in the Ephraim hills, seventeen or eighteen miles south of Samaria.² He appears even in the far southern wilderness of Edom, voluntarily accompanying the joint army of Israel on its march against Moab,³ and then, again, in Damascus, the Syrian capital, fully 125 miles north-east of his own city. His occasional home at Carmel, moreover, was well known, and was the centre of religious gatherings on Sabbaths and new moons.⁴ Elijah had kept aloof from the great, but Elisha had frequent relations with two kings, Joram and Joash, and stood on such a footing with them and their highest subjects, that he could promise his Shunammite hostess to speak for her, either to royalty itself, or to the "Captain of the Host."⁵ A citizen among citizens, he moved about amidst the people leaning on his staff;⁶ his dress that of ordinary life; nor do we hear of his wearing even the sheepskin mantle of Elijah which he had inherited.⁷

In the quieter times on which his lot had fallen, he had no need for the sternness of his master. The doom of Ahab's house was, indeed, irreversible, and the shadow on the dial was slowly creeping towards the hour of its fulfilment; but when it came it was recognised as the curse uttered long before by the Tishbite, and known to the people as overhanging the dynasty.⁸ There is even a gentle tolerance in the younger prophet, hardly to be

kindness shown him in this very village. *Wanderungen*, p. 266. See also, *ante*, p. 65, and *Land and Book*, p. 160.

¹ 2 Kings iv. 25; vi. 13.

² 2 Kings iv. 38.

³ 2 Kings iii. 11.

⁴ 2 Kings iv. 23.

⁵ 2 Kings iv. 13; v. 8; vi. 9, 21, 32; vii. 1; viii. 4; ix. 1; xiii. 14.

⁶ 2 Kings iv. 29. Zech. viii. 4.

⁷ 2 Kings ii. 13.

⁸ 2 Kings ix. 26, 36; x. 10.

expected in such an age; as when he listens to Naaman's difficulty about his forced attendance on his master at the temple of Rimmon, the god of Damascus. In every way he shows touches of a softer and calmer nature than that of Elijah. He weeps at the thought of the troubles in store for Israel from Hazael, and the great characteristic of his miracles is a beneficent sympathy with even the poorest.

But though thus tender-spirited by nature, he could be stern when occasion demanded, and, like his master, he knew nothing of the fear of man. Though he bore with Joram while yielding and passive, he could not forget what his father had been, and when duty demanded, turns from him, and bids him consult, instead, the prophets of Ahab and Jezebel;¹ nor does he shrink from denouncing him to the elders of Samaria as the son of a murderer, ready to follow his father's steps.² In the punishment of Gehazi he shows himself prompt and unbending in his severity. One incident, indeed, seems at first sight an outbreak of unwarrantable anger and harshness; the destruction of the so-called "children," at Bethel. But examination tempers the censure.

The choice of Bethel by Jeroboam as the head-quarters of the calf worship, the seat of a grand temple built in opposition to that at Jerusalem, and of a royal palace, had at once flattered and enriched the inhabitants, and kindled their fierce and interested hatred of those, who, like the prophets, denounced the royal action. The citizens had become, it would appear, almost the counterparts of the bigoted Mahommedans of Safed or Nablûs, who at this day insult and often attack any Christian stranger who enters their limits; even the children cursing the "infidel" as he passes. As Elisha was making his way

¹ 2 Kings iii. 13.

² 2 Kings vi. 32.

up the hill to the town such an outburst of fanatical hatred greeted him. A band of young men, not children,¹ hurled opprobrious epithets at him as the representative of the ancient faith which they had abandoned. He was to them only a "bald-head," that is, in the old Hebrew vocabulary, a leper—for baldness was a great sign of leprosy; a taunt embodying concentrated hatred and aversion. But it was his religion that was his leprosy in their eyes, for he was still in his early prime, with nearly fifty years of life before him, and physical baldness is not to be thought of.² That such a manifestation of resolute and blasphemous irreligion should be followed by a swift and exemplary penalty, is only in keeping with the history of a people, among whom sins against religion had often before been marked by similar Divine visitations.

Elijah has left a record of great public acts to which the miraculous was, as it were, subordinate; but while few of the acts of Elisha are mentioned, he is noted for the number of his miracles. Was it because the power and goodness of Jehovah needed to be specially impressed on a people prone to apostatize, and tempted to do so by the rival wonders of the priests of Baal? The times of Moses and Joshua, in which the supreme claims of the true religion had to be urged on the community, in

¹ The word is *Naar*, and is used of Solomon at his accession, when he was at least twenty years old (1 Kings iii. 7); of Jeremiah, when called to be a prophet (Jer. i. 6, 7); and the companions of King Rehoboam who, himself, was forty years old when he began to reign, are described by the word *Yeled*, which is often translated in our version by "child," e.g. 1 Kings iii. 25; xvii. 21; (see 1 Kings xii. 8, 10, 14; 2 Chron. x. 14).

² All consecrated persons, whether priests or Nazarites, were forbidden to shave the hair off any part of their head. Hence baldness was held a disgrace. Lev. xxi. 5. Num. vi. 5. Isa. iii. 17; xv. 2. On this incident see Bähr. *Die B der Könige*, in loc.

preparation for their entrance on a heathen district, and permanent residence in the presence of idolatry, had been marked by a similar activity of supernatural interposition. So, also, had the close of the era of the Judges, when the smouldering loyalty to Jehovah needed to be rekindled to a flame. Special power to work miracles may, therefore, have been granted to Elijah and Elisha, to strengthen faith in Jehovah at a time when it was in abeyance, and to rouse, if possible, the languid zeal of the nation.

The wonders recorded of Elisha, as has been noticed, are a testimony to his gentle and loving nature. He heals the waters of Jericho by casting salt into them from a new cruse, doubtless with due invocation of God, and from that time the district had no more reason to lament a fatality which had been associated by them with the use of these springs.¹ A prophet's widow has her oil increased, and thus obtains the means of preventing her two sons from being sold as slaves, for her husband's debts—an outrage contrary to the law, but permitted in those unsettled and half heathen times.² For his rich but childless hostess at Shunem he obtains the gift of a son, the honour most highly prized by Hebrew women, and

¹ 2 Kings ii. 19. They were believed to cause children to be born dead. The spring was apparently the "Ain es Sultan." *Thenius. Hitzig.*

² A man who had mortgaged his property and could not support his family might sell *himself* to another Hebrew, to obtain maintenance, and, it might be, a surplus to redeem his inheritance (Lev. xxv. 25, 29). Michaelis thinks that under this law a creditor could seize his debtor and sell him as a slave; but this inference is unwarranted, for the Hebrew speaks of him as *selling himself*, not as *being sold*. Ges., *Thes.*, p. 787. The case in Matt. xviii. 25, is probably borrowed from Roman usages. In Isa. l. 1, the reference is to one who is already a slave.

restores him to life, when, years after, he had suddenly died.¹ He replaces even so slight a loss as that of an axe-head which has fallen through the thickets of the Jordan into the river, as the sons of the prophets are hewing wood to build new huts in their settlement. The deadly herbs² brought by one of the community, in the lap of his mantle, and shred into their humble pottage, are made harmless. At Baal-shalisha, in the hills of Ephraim, he gives to the poor the presents brought him, and miraculously increases them, that none may want.³ If he smites

¹ "I know by experience that this valley glows like a furnace in harvest-time." Thomson's *Land and Book*, p. 457. The boy died of a sunstroke. Elisha was ten or twelve miles off at Carmel. The mother's falling down and clasping the feet of the prophet were actions which are still seen every day in the East. The command to Gehazi not to salute any one by the way was equivalent to saying—lose no time in idle compliments; for the formal salutations, then as now, in use, were tedious and protracted * (2 Kings viii. 3). It is said that the Shunammite widow lost her estate by having gone to the sea plain during a temporary famine. It is still common even for petty sheiks to confiscate the property of any one who leaves the country for a time, and it can hardly be restored except by powerful mediation. That Gehazi should have talked with the king is in perfect keeping with the habits of Eastern princes, and that his representation should have got the widow's land back to her is no less true to the ways of Eastern rulers. The use of the prophet's staff by Gehazi finds a curious illustration in an almost similar use of the staff of a reputedly inspired man in the Polynesian Islands. It was simply held before the sick person, who was expected to recover by its presence. Turner's *Polynesia*.

² Apparently the colocynth, which grows most abundantly on the barren sands near Gilgal, and all round the Dead Sea, covering much ground with its tendrils, and bearing prodigious quantities of fruit. Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 452.

³ 2 Kings iv. 38-44.

* Furrer, p. 85.

the Syrians with blindness, he speedily removes it; and while Elijah predicts famine, he foretells plenty.¹

But though the miracles of Elisha often affected only individuals, and his days passed in the quiet of ordinary life, his influence was wide and powerful. Elijah had lamented at the end of his career the disappointment of his hopes; Elisha's life, if it knew no moments of supreme exaltation, closed amidst universal veneration. For many years he was the foremost subject in the land, for he died under the third king of a dynasty he had founded. Jehoshaphat consults him in war. Joram seeks his advice respecting the treatment of prisoners. Benhadad of Damascus sends to him in sickness. Hazael, the future king, is awed before him, and Naaman listens to him with the lowliest respect.² His end is in harmony with such a dignity in his lifetime. In his extreme old age, the king visited him on his sick bed, to receive his dying counsels, and he was honoured with a splendid funeral.³ Nor did the veneration in which he was held cease with his life. A splendid monument raised over his grave near Samaria, was shown with reverence in after ages, and funeral dances were celebrated periodically in his honour round the sacred spot where he lay.⁴

The condition of the kingdom of Judah after the death of the good Jehoshaphat was sad in the extreme. His son Jehoram had been associated with him on the throne for some years, but had reached the age of thirty-two before he entered on his independent reign. His brother-in-law, Joram, the son of Ahab, had already been two years in power at Samaria, after the death of

¹ 2 Kings vi. 18-20; vii. 1.

² 2 Kings iii. 11-19; vi. 21; viii. 7-8, 11-13; xiii. 14-19.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. viii. 6.

⁴ Jerome, *Comm. on Obad.* i. 1. *Epitaph. Paulæ*, § 13.

Ahaziah, his brother. The invasion of Moab which reduced Mesha to such extremity, had taken place at the opening of Joram's reign, shortly before the close of that of Jehoshaphat. But, as often happens, the son of one so good and wise proved a painful contrast to his father. Married to Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, he had from the first fallen under her influence, which she used to promote the worship of the Phenician gods, so dear to her race. Men recalled the parallel case of Rehoboam, the slave of his heathen mother, Naamah the Ammonitess, and of his wife Maachah, the grand-daughter of Absalom, who was a zealot for idolatry.¹ As in the last century, so also now, female influence was introducing heathenism into Judah, with all the calamities it brought in its train. Athaliah was the close counterpart of her mother, and was destined to play even a more terrible part. The fierce determined energy; the fanatical zeal for Phenician superstition; the utter unscrupulousness alike of heart and conscience which characterized Jezebel, were as marked in her daughter. We see her hand already in the opening act of her husband's reign. Imitating the example set long before by Abimelech, in slaying all the sons of Gideon, he signalized his accession by the murder of his brothers, six in number. Jehoshaphat, like Rehoboam, had withdrawn them from the luxurious idleness of Eastern princes by appointing them over different fortified towns, with separate private establishments. But their birth no less than their local dignity was a crime in the jealous eyes of Jehoram. Numbers of officials and others supposed to favour them, shared their fate, that the throne might fear no disturbance. The mere tool of his wife, he let her have her way in promoting idolatry.

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. x. 1. 1 Kings xv. 13. 2 Chron. xv. 16. She was descended from Tamar.

High places to Baal and Ashtoreth rose in the cities of of Judah.¹ The worship of Jehovah in the temple was still permitted, but heathenism, thus favoured by the court, threatened to cover the land. Elijah, who was alive at Jehoram's accession, had sent him a stern denunciation of his apostasy and his crimes; anticipating in this single instance the practice of later prophets, by committing his message to writing.² But it had no effect on Jehoram's course.³ Weak and incapable alike as a man and a king, his reign was a succession of public humiliations which reduced the country to such weakness that it seemed as if the "lamp" promised to burn in the House of David must have gone out, but for the faithfulness of Jehovah to His covenant.⁴

Under the strong and firm hand of Jehoshaphat, Edom had been incorporated once more in the dominions of Judah, under a vassal king,⁵ but the weakness of Jehoram encouraged its revolt. Longing to regain the independence lost under David, it rebelled, perhaps in alliance with Moab, and set up a scion of its ancient princely House as king.⁶ The Jews in the country were mur-

¹ 2 Chron. xxi. 1-11. For "mountains" read "cities."

² See p. 111.

³ 2 Chron. xxi. 12-15. In 2 Kings viii. 19, it is said that "Jehovah would not destroy Judah for David His servant's sake, as He promised him to give him alway a light," &c. This expression alludes to the universal custom in the East of keeping a light burning all night in each house. Even the poorest woman rises through the night to trim her lamp, and it would be the worst of omens if it went out. Neil's *Palestine Explored*, p. 91. Furrer's *Palästina*, p. 109. This custom illustrates many texts; among others: 1 Kings xi. 36; xv. 4. Job xviii. 5, 6; xxi. 17. Prov. xiii. 9. Jer. xxv. 10. Rev. xviii. 23.

⁴ 2 Kings viii. 19. 2 Chron. xxi. 7.

⁵ 1 Kings xxii. 48. 2 Kings iii. 9.

⁶ 2 Kings viii. 20. 2 Chron. xxi. 8.

dered,¹ and a fierce resolution to die for freedom, if necessary, filled all breasts. Jehoram invaded the wild mountains of Seir² with infantry and chariots, but only to find himself hopelessly surrounded, and to be forced to save himself and part of his army by cutting his way by night through the enemy.³ Edom was lost, and remained for fifty years independent. Encouraged by its success, the Philistines also rose. Libnah, an old Canaanite royal city, and afterwards a Levitical town⁴ under Joshua, revolted and joined them. Gath, the capture of which had been one of the glories of David's reign, regained its independence,⁵ and even assumed the aggressive. The Philistines, in alliance with Arab tribes⁶ from the south, invaded Jerusalem. Desolating the country and carrying off multitudes of the people as slaves,⁷ they finally stormed the city, sacking the palace and capturing all the royal family and the king's harem; Jehoahaz, afterwards known as Ahaziah, alone, of the royal family, escaping.⁸

¹ Joel iii. 19. Hitzig p. 88, *Joel*.

² 2 Kings viii. 21 reads "Zair," but the Vulgate renders it Seir. Graetz and Ewald think of Zoar, the palm city, at the south corner of the Dead Sea.

³ 2 Kings viii. 21. 2 Chron. xxi. 9.

⁴ Josh. xii. 15; xv. 42. Supposed to be Tell es Safieh, near Eleutheropolis, but this is doubtful. Libnah was afterwards reconquered, as it appears in the list of fortified towns of Judah besieged by Sennacherib. 2 Kings xix. 8.

⁵ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 564.

⁶ The Arabs were in the pay of the Philistines in the time of Alexander the Great. *Hitzig*, vol. i. p. 201.

⁷ Amos i. 6-8.

⁸ Zöckler, *Die B. der Chroniker*, ii. c. 21, v. 17, thinks that only the royal camp was taken, since there is no mention of the temple being sacked. The *Sept.* has Ahaziah instead of Jehoahaz. See 2 Kings ix. 22, 29.

A reign so disastrous and so obnoxious to the national instincts in its religious policy, alienated the people. A courtly faction, which supported Queen Athaliah in her heathen tastes, had already sprung up, but it had as yet no hold on the population at large. Jehoram, moreover, seemed in his own person to be judged and punished for his course, by a long and agonizing internal disease which had struck him down. When, therefore, he died, no pretence of regret was heard; the customary funeral honours of a king were denied him, and his body, refused admission to the royal tombs, was buried in a separate spot inside the walls.¹ The apostate could not be allowed to sleep in the sepulchre of David.

The incident of Naaman's visit to Elisha falls apparently in these years. The successive defeats of Benhadad by Ahab² and by the Assyrian king³ had so weakened Syria, that the chronic war with Israel had dwindled into fierce marauding expeditions over the border, to plunder, and carry off slaves. One of the most famous leaders of these forays, was Naaman,—“the good fellow,”—a dashing officer, but, unfortunately for himself, a leper. In Israel this would have disqualified him for public duty, but it was different at Damascus. A Hebrew slave girl's prattle to his wife, her mistress, about the prophet at Samaria, who could cure her master, led to his hearing of Elisha. Eagerly catching at any chance, he laid the matter before Benhadad, and not only received permission to go to Samaria, but bore with him a royal autograph letter from his sovereign to Joram, asking his kind offices in the strange mission. To come before any one without a gift when a favour was to be asked, would have been inexcusable rudeness; but when the favour was health, and the personage approached a man

¹ 2 Chron. xxi. 19, 20.

² See p. 84 f.

³ See p. 89 f.

who had power with the god of his country, no bounty could be too great to propitiate his good-will. The priests of Damascus would have taken any gift offered them, as a matter of course, and Elisha, it was assumed, was like them in this respect. Naaman carried with him, therefore, ten talents of silver, worth about £3,750, and 6,000 pieces of gold, worth twice as much,¹ and ten costly robes; part to be given beforehand, the rest when he was cured. The terror of Joram at Benhadad's letter, asking him to cure Naaman's leprosy; "as if he were God," or could raise a man from this living death, is vividly painted in the sacred narrative. The Syrian finally draws up with his chariot and escort at the humble door of the prophet; unwilling, perhaps, to intrude on the holy man, or thinking it may be, that Elisha might well come out to one in his high position. The message sent to him by Gehazi, to wash seven times in Jordan, seems a designed affront, for he cannot realize that the prophet, as the representative of Jehovah, is greater than kings, or that he shrinks from appearing in person before one who had done so much harm to his people. That the muddy waters of Jordan should heal him appears like mockery. Did not the clear mountain streams from Lebanon—Abana and Pharphar—the Barady and its principal confluent, flow through Damascus?² If bathing were the cure, why not they rather than the turbid river of Israel.³ But quiet counsel from his attendants leads to wiser thoughts; Naaman frankly complies and is healed. Yet Elisha will take no reward. The gifts of Jehovah are free. His prophet is not a greedy heathen priest.

¹ *Keil*.

² *Kneucker. Bib. Lex.*, vol. i. pp. 114, 558. The Greeks called the "Abana" "the golden stream," from its clear beauty.

³ Jordan is turbid with the clay of its course.

It is in keeping with the ideas of the age, that the grateful Syrian should ask leave to carry back to Damascus two mules' burden of earth to build an altar to Jehovah on the soil of His own land; on which alone, men would then think, He could be rightly honoured. The altar, moreover, would be a memorial to the God of Israel in a foreign land,¹ like the synagogue raised, ages later, by the Jews of Nahardea, in Persia, all the stones and earth of which had been brought from Jerusalem.² He makes only one request more, and this the prophet, with a fine anticipation of Christian charity, tacitly grants. When his master, leaning on his arm, required him to go into the temple of Rimmon, and he had to prostrate himself before the god; he trusted it would not be reckoned disloyalty to Jehovah, whom alone he would henceforth really worship. Gehazi's punishment³ for treacherous meanness which compromised not only Elisha, but the true religion itself, is a fitting pendant to the story.

While thus tender and pitiful even to a public enemy in his affliction, Elisha was none the less loyal and vigilant on behalf of his own people. The frequent incursions of the Syrians found no more watchful eye on them than his, and were foiled by him again and again.⁴ A great effort was at last, however, made by Benhadad to retrieve his uniform failures in the past. Collecting the whole

¹ Bähr, *Die B. der Könige*, p. 288.

² *Benjamin of Tudela*.

³ Gehazi might have been expected to have followed Elisha as the leading prophet of his age. His master had thus followed Elijah, to whom his relations had been similar. But Gehazi in his heart was unworthy, and instead of inheriting the spiritual honours that seemed to await him, became the founder of a race of lepers bearing on their foreheads the mark of their accursed ancestry. Stanley. 2 Kings v. 27.

⁴ 2 Kings vi. 8-23.

force of his kingdom, he once more besieged Samaria, from the walls of which he had retreated ignominiously about ten years before.¹ Closely investing it, his troops, looking down from the neighbouring hills, could see the misery of the citizens, which ere long became terrible. The head of an ass, though that of an unclean beast, was gladly bought for eighty shekels, or about eight pounds sterling,² while a pint of dove's dung,³ brought five shekels, or about fifteen shillings.⁴ Such misery was unendurable. Face to face with death, the wretched population grew desperate; even mothers killing their children for food. Elisha, who was in the town, urged resistance to the uttermost, promising deliverance from God. Joram, however, shocked by overhearing a dispute in which two women wrangled about killing and eating their infants; instead of blaming his own character and weak rule, turned against the prophet for having opposed surrender. He was making his wonted round along the broad top of the city wall at the time, and rent his outer robe in grief at the awful revelation, vowing vengeance on Elisha. King as he was, he had fasted, and worn sackcloth next his skin⁵ at the prophet's words, and yet they had come to nothing. The author of so much misery should die. An attendant was therefore sent to Elisha's house with

¹ 1 Kings xx.

² *Thenius.*

³ The cab was the fourth part of a seah = two quarts. So say the Rabbis. *Bähr.* Dove's dung may either be taken literally or it may have been the name of some small pea or grain. The soap plant is called "sparrow's dung" by the Arabs. Plutarch mentions a siege in which an ass's head was hardly to be bought for sixty drachmas, though in ordinary times a live ass cost only twenty-five or thirty, and Pliny says that in Hannibal's siege of Casulinum, a mouse sold for 200 denarii = about £6. *Plut., Artaxerx., 24. Plin., Hist. Nat., viii. 57.*

⁴ *Thenius.*

⁵ 2 Kings vi. 30.

orders to behead the prophet. But the seer was on his guard. Hearing the feet of some one approaching, he ordered the elders of the city, who were with him, to press against the door, and keep it from being opened.¹ "Joram, the son of a murderer," cried he, "has sent to kill me." Presently the king himself arrived, and broke out, in his excitement, with the words,—“What good is there in waiting any longer for deliverance from Jehovah. He has let things come to such a pass that mothers are killing and eating their own children!”² But the answer was none the less calm and trustful. “To-morrow, about this time,” he was told, “plenty will reign in Samaria.” “If Jehovah, your God, make windows in heaven and rain down food for us from them, it may be so, but not otherwise,” muttered one of the officers in attendance. “You shall see the plenty,” replied Elisha, “but not taste it.”

As in other Eastern cities, some lepers had their miserable huts outside the city gates, not being permitted to enter the town. Famine had made them desperate. To steal into the city would only be to die; to go to the Syrian army could bring no worse. They would go. In the meantime, a sudden panic had seized the host of Benhadad. They had heard noises in the air which seemed like the sound of horses and chariots and the other forces of a great host. “The king of Israel has hired the northern Hittite princes and the southern Egyptian kings against us, and they are surrounding against us,” ran from lip to lip of the army, and struck its battalions with a deadly unreasoning terror. Precipitately abandoning their quarters, with the tents, horses, asses, and warlike stores, they thought only of their lives, and fled in wild confusion, leaving the encampment forsaken when the

¹ 2 Kings vi. 32.

Ibid., ver. 32.

lepers reached it. The great news having been carried back to Samaria, the remnant of armed men in the city sallied forth only to find the whole track of the fugitives strewn with evidences of their headlong flight, and before night the famished citizens, thus saved, had feasted on the plenty left behind, and enriched themselves with the spoils of the tents. The crowding at the city gate had been terrible, but it was noticed that no life was lost except that of the officer who had ridiculed the hope of deliverance. Thrown down in the crush, he had been trampled to death.

Famine, as usual, followed in the footsteps of war. The rich Shunammite had to leave her estates in Esdraelon, and go to the Philistine plains, and Elisha, partly it may be from the famine, and perhaps, also, from his strained and painful relations with Joram, since the siege and the threat of the king to murder him, had to betake himself to Damascus, where a change of dynasty was imminent. Benhadad II., unfortunate alike in his wars with Israel and Assyria, and hence, no doubt unpopular, had fallen sick. Hearing of Elisha's arrival, and remembering Naaman's cure, he sent to him eagerly as to an oracle, to learn his hopes of recovery. The spot is still pointed out, four miles from the city, where tradition affirms that Hazael, an officer of high position at the Syrian court, the envoy from the king, met the prophet; a long train of forty camels, laden with "everything good" in the city, following the cavalcade, to reward the seer.¹ "Benhadad *might* recover, but *would* die," was the ominous answer; the eyes of the prophet resting long and sadly on Hazael, as he spoke, and his tears flowing freely at

¹ The gifts to prophets and temples were sometimes immense. See *Herod.*, i. 54-57. They were likewise paraded on as great a train of horses or animals as might be, to heighten their effect,

the thought of the miseries the Syrian would cause Israel.¹ Quailing before the gaze thus fixed on him, Hazael turned aside confused and ashamed, resenting the imputation of treason. Next day, however, Hazael was king.² He, or some one commissioned by him, had overpowered Benhadad in his bath, and had suffocated him with the wet cloths he had been using.³

Benhadad, though brave, had been unsuccessful. Assyria had repeatedly defeated him; Israel had put his armies to flight once and again, and the various Syrian kings who had been his vassals had revolted.⁴ It was incumbent, therefore, on Hazael to restore the honour of the State, and to this he devoted a fierce and able energy. Notwithstanding treaty engagements, the Israelitish town of Ramoth Gilead, one of the great fastnesses on the east of Jordan, and the key to the district of Argob and Jair, had been held by the Syrians since its seizure by Benhadad I. in the reign of Omri.⁵ Ahab had perished in an attempt to recover it, and Ahaziah had died while preparing for a second expedition with the same object. Joram, encouraged by the favourable issue of the siege of Samaria, now determined on another effort to win it back. Allying himself with his nephew—Athaliah's son—Ahaziah, king of Judah—as his father had done with Jehoshaphat, the two, with their joint forces, marched across the Jordan and wrested the town from Syria⁶; holding it henceforth in spite of all the efforts of Hazael to reconquer

¹ The ferocity of ancient warfare is well shown in verse 12 of 2 Kings viii.

² The Assyrian inscriptions mention Hazael as the successor of Benhadad. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 164.

³ Ewald speaks of the quilt on which he had been lying in the hot bath as the "coverlet" used. *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 562.

⁴ Smith's *Assyria*, p. 54.

⁵ *Jos., Ant.*, VIII. xv. 3.

⁶ *Jos., Ant.*, IX. vi. 1.

it. Joram, however, narrowly escaped the fate of Ahab, for he was so severely wounded by a Syrian arrow during the fight, that he had to leave the fortress in the hands of a general-in-chief, and return to his palace at Jezreel, to be healed.¹

Meanwhile it had fared ill with the ancient faith, both in Israel and Judah. Passive under the strong and untamed will of the queen-mother Jezebel, Joram, though not himself an idolater, had, like his father Ahab, allowed her to favour and promote the heathenism she loved. The huge Baal temple, built by Ahab² in Samaria, with its staff of 450 white-robed priests,³ was maintained with great splendour. That of Asherah, at Jezreel, with 400 priests, still polluted the land by its rites and worship. The vast courts of the Samaritan Baal-temple were thronged with worshippers at the high festivals of the god. Phenician idolatry was becoming an Israelitish institution. Sacred pillars⁴ and images glittered on all sides; that of Baal himself shining out from the darkness of the inner holy of holies—half fortress, half sanctuary—in which it rose, awfully, aloft. Fifty years had passed since the introduction of heathenism, yet the open worshippers of Baal were still so few, outside the court party in Samaria, that all found in the whole kingdom, could assemble at one time in the temple area.⁵ Indifference, however, had spread far and wide; immorality was sapping the national character, and the future ruin of Jehovah worship seemed assured, if things continued as they were.

¹ 2 Kings viii. 28; ix. 15. 2 Chron. xxii. 6.

² 1 Kings xvi. 32.

³ Baal, in *Riehm*.

⁴ These pillars were shaped like obelisks. *Movers*. J. G. Müller thinks they were dials and the like. *Baal*, in *Herzog*.

⁵ 2 Kings x. 21.

In Judah the baleful influence of Jezebel was no less threatening; Athaliah, her daughter, repeating there the part her mother was playing in Israel. Wholly under her spell, her husband, Jehoram, had allowed Baal worship to be set up, in its most repulsive features, in Jerusalem itself. After his death, their one surviving son, Jehoahaz or Azariah, was only king in name. In reality, Athaliah reigned. A temple to Baal had already been built by her family, in part from the stones of the temple of Jehovah, which had been defaced to construct it; and the sacred vessels had been taken for the service of the idol.¹ It had its altars, images, and staff of clergy, under a chief--Mattan--the only priest of Baal whose name has survived.² A heathen camarilla was supreme alike in Jerusalem and Samaria. The moral and political cancer of heathenism had invaded the last sanctuary of Jehovah worship. Israel had long been tainted; Judah was now in peril. The national faith was in danger of being driven from the land.

In such a crisis the prophets, in all emergencies the faithful Swiss Guard of the true religion, must, at last, have felt it imperative to break, finally and for ever, with the house of Ahab. The mass of the people were still more or less loyal to the past, and they were profoundly discontented. The long protest of Elijah and Elisha had spread silently through the land, and had undermined the authority of the reigning house. That a woman like Jezebel, a foreigner and a heathen--should have held the sway in Israel for two reigns--lording it over the Church as well as the State, at the caprice of her imperious will, had become intolerable. Only a spark was needed to kindle a universal revolt. To the prophets especially, and among them to Elisha, their head, the

¹ 2 Chron. xxiv. 4, 7.

² 2 Kings xi. 18.

extremest measures that promised to save the country were not only justifiable, but a duty. All was at stake. Religion and even the nation itself must perish if the family of Ahab continued to reign. But the revolution thus believed to be unavoidable, required a first impulse. On whom did it devolve to give this but on the head of the prophets, as the divinely commissioned representative of nationality, of the true religion, and of popular freedom and rights? Nor did it seem to Elisha that he could rely simply on moral influence. The spirit of Elijah had risen within him. The only adequate action to be taken was political. The sternness and fire-like energy of his master pointed out what appeared to be the true course. Truth and right, in this view of things, could be served only by his throwing himself directly into the stream of events, and bringing about a violent solution of the crisis. The revolution which presently developed itself, under his direct impulse, was at once the execution of a long impending judgment on the house of Ahab for its crimes, and a fierce stroke for the preservation of the religious and national interests of the land.





CHAPTER VI.

THE REACTION AGAINST HEATHENISM.

ISRAEL.

JEHU, B.C. 883-855.

JUDAH.

ATHALIAH, B.C. 883-877.

JEHOASH, „ 877-857.

THE army at Ramoth Gilead had been left by Joram under the command of his chief officer, Jehu,¹ a veteran who in his youth had been in the body guard of Ahab, and high in his favour. Since then, his long service and apparent fidelity had secured him the confidence of Ahaziah and Joram. Under a smooth exterior however, had his master known it, there lay hidden the most dangerous qualities. Apparently no more than a fiery and resolute soldier, he was a true Hebrew in his power of dissimulation and subtle craft. He had ridden in the chariot behind Ahab, with his comrade Bidkar or Bar Dakar, on that fatal journey from Samaria to Jezreel, when Elijah suddenly encountered the king and denounced the murder of Naboth and his sons, and he had heard the portentous curse on Ahab and his house. The scene and the sentence of wrath could never be forgotten, and perhaps raised ambitious thoughts, cherished ever after in his heart. Elijah's bearing, moreover, may have shown that he expected him to be the instrument of vengeance. In any case, he had long brooded

¹ 2 Kings ix. 25.

over the prophet's words. Yet he had borne himself so that his rise had been steady, till he was next in rank to the royal family, as commander of the host. Elijah had been directed at Horeb to anoint him future king of Israel, but for some unknown reason the commission had remained for many years unfulfilled. He was now, apparently, about forty, but retained all the energy of youth; a man of high consideration among his fellows; accustomed to command and to be obeyed. His reckless impetuosity showed itself in his furious riding and driving, by which he was known through the army. But while capable of the swiftest and sternest action, he could employ for his ends, when it suited, the darkest treachery; the union of these opposite qualities constituting indeed his special characteristic. Long ready for treason he only waited an opportunity and a hint from the prophets, whose support and authority with the people he needed, and the race of Ahab was lost.

No more suitable instrument of a great political revolution could have been found; none fitter to destroy Baal worship and avenge the martyrs of Ahab and Jezebel's reign. Without a trace of personal religion, he could assume a holy zeal as the champion of Jehovah, and no tenderness or fear would hinder it going all needed lengths.

Some weeks after Joram's retirement, wounded, to Jezreel, a young prophet,¹ sent by Elisha, suddenly appeared in Ramoth Gilead, his mantle girt up round him, as with runners or men in great haste. Making his way to the house where Jehu was sitting in council with his chief officers, he called him apart, and took him from chamber to chamber into the innermost room of the

¹ Said by tradition to have been the future prophet Jonah, and the son of the widow of Sarepta. See p. 65.

house, where he was absolutely alone. Producing a small horn of sacred oil¹ he poured it upon Jehu's head, telling him that God had anointed him king, with the express commission to cut off "the whole house of Ahab" as that of Jeroboam and that of Baasha had perished.² This done, the visitor left the house and disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

Such an interruption, by such a personage, had raised the wonder of the assembled officers. What had the mad fellow said? For to rough soldiers a prophet was a subject of mingled ridicule and superstitious fear. Evading an answer for the moment, Jehu was bluntly told that he lied; so rude were the manners of the camp.³ The next instant he disclosed the communication he had received. It was enough. The hollowness of Joram's position showed itself at once. All who heard were ready to revolt, and the words of Jehu kindled the smouldering disaffection to a flame. The discontent of the nation with the existing government had spread even to the highest ranks of the army, and only a signal was needed to inaugurate a revolution. In a moment loud shouts of loyalty to Jehu as king rose from all present. Throwing their great square military cloaks⁴ on the ground as an extemporized carpet of state, they conducted him to the top of the stairs leading to the flat roof, and seating him there as on a throne—with the sky for background—blew wild flourishes on their trumpets, and proclaimed him king; the whole army presently joining the cry.

It was necessary, however, that no time should be lost,

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. vi. 1.

² 2 Kings ix. 1-10

³ One is reminded of the language of the heroes of the *Iliad* to each other.

⁴ The "beged," from "bagad," to cover.

and that news of the movement should, meanwhile, be kept from reaching Joram. Strict orders were therefore given that no one should leave the city. Mounting his chariot with his old comrade Bidkar, and taking with him a detachment of troops, Jehu set off, armed with his bow and quiver, at the wildest speed, towards Jezreel, turning back every one he overtook on the road. It was a long ride of more than fifty miles, but he pressed on at furious haste. Ramoth was built on the crest of a hill 2,700 feet above the sea.¹ Thence Jehu's party rushed northwards, past Jebel Oscha, 3,400 feet high, towards the deep gorge of the Jabbok; thence, still to the north, past Jabesh Gilead, looking down from its hills; then, on to the hill where stood Pella, in later times. Rounding this, the track bent due east to the sunken bed of the Jordan, which was forded opposite Bethshean. Thence the steep wady El Djalud, with Gideon's Spring of Trembling, flowing from ledge to ledge down its centre, led them straight up to Esdraelon and Jezreel. Sentinels on the watch-tower crowning the town hill, close to the palace, noticed, five or six miles off, a cloud of dust² in the east; the sign that chariots approached. Forthwith a rider was sent out to learn their message. He was instantly ordered to fall behind and follow. A second was similarly detained. At last Joram, learning that the furious driving marked the cavalcade as attending Jehu, and suspecting no treachery, ordered his own chariot and rode out to meet him, accompanied by King Ahaziah of Judah, then at Jezreel to sympathize with his wounded uncle. They expected stirring news from Ramoth, and were eager to hear them. Had Hazael made peace?

¹ Kiepert's *Map*.

² 2 Kings ix. 17, *Sept.* Jehu could be seen five or six miles off. *Land and Book*, p. 450.

shouted Joram as he came near. "Peace!" cried Jehu, with an ominous turn of the word, "what peace can there be as long as Jezebel acts so wickedly as she does." Joram, thus treated as a mere passive tool, and keenly aware of the queen mother's unpopularity, felt in a moment that all was lost. The hatred of the people, so long pent up, had at last broken out. Muttering the words, "Treachery, Ahaziah," he turned the chariot and hastily fled. But an arrow from Jehu pierced him through and through¹ next moment, and he fell out of his chariot dying, close to the very field of Naboth in which Elijah had said that the crime of Ahab would be avenged. To stop and cast the body into Naboth's ground, that the words of the prophet might be literally fulfilled, detained Jehu a moment, and gave Ahaziah a passing advantage. Fleeing straight south towards Jerusalem, he had crossed Esdraelon and reached the "hollow,"² or perhaps "rough ascent," at Engannim—the Fountain of the Gardens³—leading to Ibleam, the present Belame, on the edge of the hills of Samaria, before he was overtaken. There, however, an arrow mortally wounded him, but he managed to drive on to the fortified town Megiddo, not far off, where he died.⁴ Thence, his attendants, were able

¹ 2 Kings ix. 24.

² *Conder*; but Gesenius translates the words "the ascent of the whelps;" Mühlau and Volck render the word "a height."

³ *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Gur*.

⁴ It is said in 2 Chron. xxii. 9, that he was hidden in Samaria and caught there and slain. "And when they had slain him they buried him." In 2 Kings ix. 27 he is said to have died at Megiddo and to have been taken thence to Jerusalem and buried in the royal tombs. Stanley thinks he may have been taken from Megiddo to Samaria after he was wounded, but that would have been to have put him into the power of Jehu, and besides, it is said that he died at Megiddo. There is, apparently, some corruption of the text.

to carry the body to Jerusalem ; Jehu being too busy to hinder them.

Jezebel, now a woman approaching sixty, had seen her son's murder from her palace windows, on the line of the town wall, overlooking the plain. But her spirit was as haughty and imperious as ever ; for, with all her faults, she at least knew no fear. Ordering her maids to paint her eyelids with lead ore, to make them look larger and brighter, and tiring her head,—perhaps to show that she was unmoved at the prospect of death, but possibly in the thought that Jehu might fancy it would strengthen his position to take her nominally into his harem, as kings took over the wives of their predecessors,—she placed herself in the high latticed window of the palace tower,¹ and awaited his approach. She knew her fate hung on a thread, for who did not hate her—but she hastened it by a taunt. “What came of Zimri, who murdered his master as thou hast done?” was her haughty greeting to Jehu.² “Are any of you on my side?” shouted he, in reply, halting as he rode up. Two or three eunuchs, looking out from behind her, answered the summons, for even in the palace she had no friends. “Then throw her down” cried Jehu, and a moment after she lay broken and mangled on the ground, at his feet ; her blood splashing up on the walls and on his horses. Another instant, and the wheels of his chariot crashed over her, that he might say he had trampled her under foot.³ He could now rest for a time. Driving into the palace as its master, he ordered refreshment after his long and wearisome journey. The first act in the tragedy was over. Cheered by food and

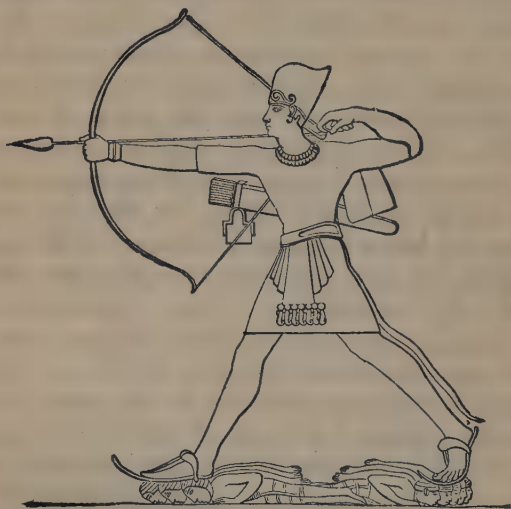
¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. vi. 4.

² This seems the meaning, 2 Kings ix. 32.

³ *Ibid.*, ver. 33.

drink, he could even be generous. "Let them go out and bury the cursed woman, for after all she is a king's daughter." But the half wild town dogs which swarm in all Eastern cities had anticipated interference.¹ Nothing was left of her but the skull, the feet and the palms of the hands. Elijah's words had come true.

Jehu had founded a dynasty that was to last 114 years; twice as long as any in Israel before it. But there was



TREADING THE CONQUERED UNDER FOOT.—Wady Sheikh.

still much, in his opinion, to be done. Half measures did not please him. He would root out all connected

¹ Dean Stanley imagines the body to have been cast on the mounds, outside the walls, on which all the offal of the town was thrown. These may have been near the palace windows, but it hardly seems probable even in the unsanitary and filthy East.

Bruce saw the town dogs in Abyssinia eating the bodies of state criminals just killed.

with Ahab, with a relentless sternness hitherto unequalled in the history of the monarchy. Samaria was not as yet in his power. No fewer than seventy sons of Ahab's vast polygamous family—some of them doubtless children¹—lived there in charge of the leading men. One of these might strike for his father's throne. Writing a letter to their guardians, Jehu, knowing his power, sent them a defiance. As they had control of the capital, with its magazines of arms and strong defences, he told them, with bitter irony, they might perhaps wish to set up a rival to him. A submissive answer being returned, he threw off disguise. "Let them, if they were loyal, send the heads of the whole seventy at once to Jezreel?" This was presently done, and he could now feel secure. The dynasty of Omri, after reigning about fifty years, had been exterminated. Two rows of heads piled up at the gate of the palace attested the fact. But even this massacre was not enough. All the courtiers of the late king and of his father, and all connected with them, even to the palace priests, were killed.²

Now at last Jehu could enter Samaria, but his journey thither was stained with more blood. Forty-two of Joram's sons or nephews³ had set out from Jerusalem to visit him; and were as yet ignorant of his fate or that of their own king. They had reached the "Shearing House," a now unknown spot, between Jezreel and Samaria, frequented by the shepherds of the plain. It

¹ 2 Kings x. 1.

² Graetz thinks that 2 Kings x. 11, refers to those by whom Ahab's sons had been murdered. Jehu he fancies treats them as criminals for the act which he had demanded. He could thus better screen himself from such an increase of guilt.

³ 2 Kings x. 12-14. 2 Chron. xxii. 8.

was on Jehu's way, and they were instantly arrested and put to death on his arrival; their bodies being thrown into the huge rain-water cistern of the village, as those of our own countrywomen were cast, during the Indian Mutiny, into the well of Cawnpore.

Riding on, Jehu encountered one in whose fierce but honest zeal for Jehovah worship he justly reckoned on finding hearty support. It was Jonadab, son of Rechab the "Rider,"¹ whom the influence of Elijah had led to found a new austere sect of Arab-like Nazarites, famous in those days as zealots for the pure worship of Jehovah.² Invited into Jehu's chariot, he eagerly joined him, and the two rode together into Samaria, doubtless planning to annihilate Baal worship in Israel. To Jonadab, all who had joined in it were an abomination. He was ready to cut them off, root and branch.

Hitherto nothing had passed to mark Jehu as opposed to the Phenician idolatry. He might secretly be disposed to favour or at least to tolerate it. The heathen priests of the palace had fallen because connected with the ruined dynasty. Profound dissimulation and intrepid daring equally characterized the new king, for, amidst all this apparent indifference, he had determined to extinguish Baal worship in blood. Jonadab and he now matured their plans to do so. A great festival of the god was proclaimed; Ahab had served him a little, but Jehu would serve him much. All the followers of the god through the whole land were commanded, on pain of death, to appear, dressed in the special garment worn at a high feast of the idol. On the fixed day a vast assembly gathered in the great Baal temple in Samaria. The usual cry was raised, that no one but a votary of the god was to remain, to see the holy mysteries. Jehu,

¹ See page 60.

² *Ibid.*

as if the foremost among these, and most devoted, stood, accompanied by Jonadab, at the great altar, and offered burnt sacrifice to the idol; no symptom of the treachery he designed showing itself on his unmoved features. But he had placed armed men at the doors; some to enter at his order, while others remained to prevent escape. The sacrifice ended, the mask was dropped. At a given signal the whole gay multitude were mercilessly cut down. The hideous massacre over, the image of Baal was dragged from the inner fortress-like sanctuary in which it towered aloft, and, with all the symbols and statues of the other deities around,¹ was thrown down and broken to pieces. The temple itself was then razed to the ground, and its site contemptuously turned into a depository of the filth of the town. Baal worship was for ever rooted out from Israel, though, strange to say, the Asherah in Samaria escaped the general destruction,² for it was still standing in the next reign. Jehovah worship was once more triumphantly established as the national faith, but under the symbols of the golden calves of Bethel and Dan. Yet Jehu was moved by policy only, not by high religious principles.

The death of King Ahaziah was the signal for an equally startling revolution in Judah. He had been the youngest son of Jehoram, for the Arabs in their invasion a few years before, probably as the hired allies of the Philistines, having captured the royal harem and all the king's sons but one, had spared the former and killed the latter. Ahaziah, then known as Jehoahaz, was the only survivor.³ Controlled by his mother,⁴ Athaliah, Baal worship had been vigorously maintained in Jerusalem during his reign, though there does not seem to have been a forcible

¹ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 572.

² 2 Kings xiii. 6.

³ 2 Chron. xxi. 17.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxii. 3.

suspension of the worship of Jehovah, or any formal persecution of His servants. He had been king only a year, when murdered by Jehu, at the early age of twenty-three.¹

The vast families of the past reigns—children of many different mothers—had now been almost extirpated by family feuds; by the massacre of so many princes by the Arabs; and by the fierce bloodthirstiness of Jehu.² Ahaziah, however, had left sons, for Eastern kings marry when almost boys, and there were still a number of personages more or less nearly connected with the throne. But all his children were too young to reign,³ or act alone, and Athaliah found the throne within her reach, if she chose to seize it. Fiercely ambitious and utterly unscrupulous, the opportunity was instantly embraced. Every one even distantly of the race of David was forthwith slain. Pity might have moved her to spare her grandchildren, but she had no heart. To prevent their future rivalry they were remorselessly murdered,⁴ one baby, only, of about two months old—the future Jehoash—escaping. Hurrying him and his nurse into a secret chamber in the priests' quarter of the temple, his aunt Jehoshabeath,⁵ the daughter of Jehoram, and wife of the high priest Jehoiada, was able to preserve him and his faithful attendant. The line of David had at last only

¹ For forty-two, 2 Chron. xxii. 2, read twenty-two. *Ewald Thenius. Keil.* The *Sept.* has twenty.

² 2 Kings x. 11.

³ In 2 Chron. xxii. 9, for, "So the house of Azariah had no power to keep still the kingdom," read, "And the house of Azariah had none who were able for the kingdom."

⁴ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 617.

⁵ 2 Chron. xxii. 11. Called Jehosheba, 2 Kings xi. 2. She was Ahaziah's sister, but the daughter of another mother than Athaliah.

a feeble infant as its representative, but he was carefully guarded in the safe shelter of the sacred precincts. Meanwhile Athaliah gave herself up with the fanatical zeal of her mother, to establish Baal worship in city and country. The temple might remain in the hands of the national party. Her thoughts were elsewhere. For the first time, a queen sat on the Jewish throne, for women had not yet sunk in the East to the insignificance to which Mahometanism has consigned them.

Jehoiada, the high priest, had held his high dignity apparently from the later years of king Jehoshaphat. He was already an old man, though it is hard to fix his exact age.¹ A relic of better times, he retained their spirit amidst the spreading degeneracy of the later reigns. Loyal to Jehovah and to the House of David, he devoted himself to the restoration of the ancient faith and of the royal cause. Biding his time, he steadily prepared for a revolution. To oppose Athaliah in the first flush of her usurpation was hopeless, but it became easier as disaffection increased, through her foreign practices and tastes. To have Phenician favourites at court; to see Baal worship rampant in the holy city; to feel that the city of David, and what was left of his kingdom, were being lowered to a mere Tyrian province, roused general indignation. At last, in the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, things were ripe for change. Jehoiada had already won over the officers of the queen's body guard, and her "runners," five in number,² and having brought them to the temple, and sworn them, by a solemn oath,

¹ Lord A. Hervey, art. *Jehoiada*, *Dict. of Bible*.

² 2 Kings xi. 4. The body guard are called "Carians" by Ewald and Graetz. If they be right, then adventurers had come from the south-west province of Asia Minor. How little we know of the movements of tribes and nations in those remote ages!

to fidelity, showed them the young king, now a child of about seven. His next step was to send them through the country to invite the priests, Levites, and local elders or "chiefs of the fathers" to Jerusalem—probably on one of the three great annual feasts, when their assembling would not attract attention. These also, having been sworn with due care and secrecy, to stand by the young prince, were permitted to see him,¹ and took the oath of fidelity. It only remained to bring matters to a crisis. Arrangements were made to hold the different gates of the temple with a strong force, and to occupy the priests' court in the same way; the space before it being left for others friendly to the revolution. To secure the requisite number of guards, the out-going courses of Levites were not dismissed as usual, but joined with those who should have taken their places.² Spears and small and large shields, which had belonged to David's guards, and had been laid up in the temple for 150 years, as well nigh sacred, were brought out and put in the hands of the officers; if only to remind them that it was for David's heir they were contending. The other guards had weapons of their own. The day chosen was the Sabbath, when crowds would gather in the temple.³ When this had arrived, and the people filled the wide courts, the young king was brought out to a central platform,⁴ raised between the former site of the brazen altar and the temple, and flanked by lines of armed men. Jehoiada now placed the crown on his head; and after doing so,⁵ laid gently on it a roll of the law of Moses.⁶ In after

¹ 2 Chron. xxiii. 3.

² *Ibid.* ver. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Graetz calls it a "pillar-like seat." *Gesch.*, vol. ii. p. 54.

⁵ *Bertheau. Thenius.*

⁶ Testimony (2 Kings xi. 12; 2 Chron. xxiii. 11), = "law."

years the act would remind him that he was bound to rule according to its directions, and even to write out a copy, and read it daily.¹ This done, there came the solemn anointing and homage. The rod of Jesse had once more blossomed; there was again a king of the root of David. Loud cries of "God bless the king" rent the air, amidst wild clapping of hands, and tumultuous exultation. Athaliah, hitherto ignorant of what was afoot, now first learnt her danger. But she had all her mother's bravery. Commanding her litter to be brought she instantly came in person to the temple. There the scene might have appalled even so stout a heart. The young king stood, crowned, on the platform, surrounded by the chief men. Choirs of Levites were chanting a coronation psalm; the temple band was playing; trumpeters ever and anon pealed out loud flourishes, and the multitude in and beyond the courts were hailing the king with wild acclamations.² Rending her clothes in her rage, she could only scream out, "Treason, treason," and wait to see if any would rally to her side. But Jehoiada soon decided her fate. "Lead her outside the sacred bounds, between your ranks," cried he to the guards, "and kill her when she is on common ground." Forthwith the crowd opened, and the doomed queen was hurried on³ till she reached the chariot gate of the palace, and there she was slain.

¹ Deut. xvii. 18-20. That this incident is mentioned in both Kings and Chronicles proves that the law was in existence at least as early as the time of Joash; a fact that bears hard on the theory of its being of no earlier date than the Exile, as the Robertson Smith critics of the day assume.

² 2 Chron. xxiii. 13, for "such as taught to sing," read "leading the chant of."

³ 2 Kings xi. 15.

The overthrow of Baal worship followed. The temple of the sun god, built, apparently, close to that of Jehovah, was at once demolished; its altars and images destroyed. Mattan, its high priest, was cut down as he stood before one of the former.¹ Unlike the reformation of Jehu, however, there was no further bloodshed. No partisans of Athaliah showed themselves either in the city or kingdom. Revolution could not have been more gentle or more popular. Both Israel and Judah were at last free from the presence of heathenism.

Jehoiada now strove to restore Jehovah worship to its former glory. The courses of priests and Levites were reorganized on the footing established by David,² and the services of the temple re-established. But the general feeling prevented the high places sacred to Jehovah, throughout the land, from being destroyed, notwithstanding the command in the law that sacrifice and incense should be offered only in the temple.³ Even it, however, had been in part mutilated to furnish materials for the house of Baal, but measures were now taken to repair it. These, unfortunately, were not carried out; for after twenty-three years,⁴ it still lay in partial ruins. The priests had been instructed to devote to its restoration the money received in payment of vows, or as free gifts,⁵ but nothing had been done. Vested interests had been affected by the arrangement; work outside their

¹ 2 Kings xi. 18.

² 2 Chron. xxiii. 18.

³ Deut. xii. 5, 6. It is, as I cannot but think, idle to argue from the fact of no temple existing for ages after the entrance into Canaan, that Deut. must have been written at a late date. If there be a prophetic element in Scripture, why should laws not have been made in anticipation of what was foreseen, especially as the centralization of worship was distinctly designed, when practicable?

⁴ 2 Kings xii. 6

⁵ 2 Kings xii. 4.

sphere had been laid on them; the people had no satisfactory proof that the money given was laid out as they wished, and contributions fell off. Above all, there was no leading spirit to infuse life and zeal into the priesthood at large. They had been ordered to collect the special tax of half a shekel a head, appointed by Moses to be raised for the Tabernacle,¹ but they put off the task. Another arrangement was consequently made. Depriving them of all control of the funds, Jehoiada himself,² and the king's scribe, undertook to check the temple receipts, for which a chest, provided with a slit to allow coin to enter, was placed near the altar. The "trespass money" and "sin money" alone were left to the priests.³ A proclamation calling on all to pay the temple tax which the Levites had neglected to gather, resulted in its being brought to Jerusalem. Honest superintendents⁴ paid the workmen directly; energy was infused into the undertaking, and the restoration was at last rapidly accomplished.⁵ Other measures were taken to provide the gold and silver needed for the service, and, after a long delay, the people saw the sanctuary once more in its full glory.⁶

Meanwhile the small heathen party, though crushed for the time, kept together; but it could do nothing so long as Jehoiada lived. An organized temple guard appointed by him protected the sacred building from surprise or injury.⁷ At his death, however, things altered greatly.

¹ 2 Chron. xxiv. 6-9. Exod. xxx. 12, 13, 14, 16. Num. i. 50. Acts vii. 44.

² By his officer. 2 Chron. xxiv. 11.

³ 2 Kings xii. 16. Num. v. 8; xviii. 8, 9.

⁴ Levites. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 11.

⁵ 2 Kings xii. 15. See on the whole history, 2 Chron. xxiv. 4-14.

⁶ 2 Kings xxii. 4-7. 2 Chron. xxiv. 13, 14.

⁷ 2 Kings xi. 18. Jer. xxix. 26.

Honoured by a grand funeral, and a burial in the city of David, among the kings whose race he had served so well, the influence he had exercised on Jehoash passed away with his death. The "princes"¹ of Judah, that is, the heads of the courtly families, had supported Athaliah in her devotion to Baal worship. The rich and powerful Phenicia was to the upper Hebrew classes of that day what Normandy was to the court of the Confessor, or Paris, under Louis Quatorze, to the later Stuarts. The worship of Jehovah might do for the common people; that of Baal was the only one fit for the great. While Jehoiada lived, they had stood aloof. At his death, however, they once more raised their heads, and having given in their adhesion to Jehoash, were restored to their old influence and authority. Their return to favour was fatal to Jehoiada's reformation. Heathenism once more enjoyed the support of the crown. It had at first shown itself under Solomon as the religion of queens; Athaliah, a woman, had reintroduced it; under Jehoash it was revived as that of the fashionable upper class, whom Athaliah's influence had brought to ape foreign manners. Asherahs and images of Baal once more rose in Judah, but the mass of the people as yet remained true to the national faith, and the priesthood, who had crowded from Israel to the southern kingdom in Jeroboam's reign, were loyal to it. Prophets also denounced the apostasy, and among them one who might well have commanded the respect of the king—Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, now high priest in his stead. He had grown up with Jehoash from childhood, and was connected with him by blood,² besides being the son of him

¹ Translated elsewhere in Chronicles, "captains," "chiefs," "rulers," "governors," "general," "stewards."

² He was the king's cousin.

to whom the king had owed his throne and his life. Standing in his place at the great altar, with the crowd of worshippers looking up from the lower courts, he earnestly condemned the heathenism of the crown and court. Furious at such a public rebuke, Jehoash had the baseness to order him to be killed where he stood, and this was at once done; the nobles, or some of the people, stoning him to death on the spot, perhaps with fragments left from the repairs of the temple. Such a deed in such a place produced a deep and abiding impression. Even in the days of Christ it was remembered with horror how he fell in the very court of the priests, between the temple building and the great altar,¹ and tradition added that the crime was committed on a Sabbath day, which was also the great Day of Atonement, and that nothing could efface or dry up his blood.² So soon had the king's

¹ Matt. xxiii. 35. He is there called the son of Barachias. This name has apparently crept into the text from a marginal gloss which confounded him with Zachariah the prophet, who was the son of Berechiah, or with another Zachariah, who was the son of Jeberechiah. Isa. viii. 2.

² R. Jochanan said: Eighty thousand priests were killed for the blood of Zacharias. R. Juda asked R. Achsa, Whereabouts they killed Zacharias, whether in the court of the women or in the court of Israel? He answered: Neither in the court of Israel, nor in the court of the women, but in the court of the priests. And that was not done to his blood which useth to be done to the blood of a ram or of a kid. Concerning these it is written: "And he shall pour out his blood and cover it with dust." They committed seven sins in that day. They killed a priest, a prophet, and a judge; they shed the blood of an innocent man; they polluted the court; and that day was the Sabbath day, and the Day of Expiation. When therefore Nebuzar-adan* went up thither he saw the blood bubbling. So he said to them, "What meaneth this?" "It is the blood," said they, "of calves, lambs and rams

* The officer appointed over Jerusalem at its capture, by Nebuchadnezzar.

gratitude to Jehoiada faded away. But the words of the martyr as he died—"Jehovah look on it and requite it"—were to be terribly fulfilled.

Both Israel and Judah in these years had the danger of a Syrian war constantly threatening them; and, indeed, had only too often to mourn the ruin and slaughter of fierce invasions. Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Ahab, and Jehoram, had alike suffered in this way; the kings of Damascus steadily assailing them in the hope of conquering the whole territory of the Ten Tribes. There was only peace when it was for a time required, to gather strength for a fresh attack, or while paralyzed by the fear of Assyria. Syrian wars, in fact, had formed the background of Jewish history from the time of the division and consequent weakening of the nation, after the death of Solomon. Under Jehu, the hereditary enemy was to prove more dangerous than ever, extending his invasions, for the first time, even to Judah.¹ Hazael, the new king of Damascus, proved fierce and able beyond any

which we have offered on the altar." "Bring then," said he, "calves, lambs, and rams, that I may try whether this be their blood." They brought them and slew them, and that blood still bubbled, but their blood did not bubble. "Discover the matter to me," said he, "or I will tear your flesh with iron rakes." Then they said to him, "This was a priest, a prophet, and a judge, who foretold to Israel all these evils which we have suffered from you, and we rose up against him and slew him." "But I," said he, "will appease him." He brought the Rabbis and slew them upon that blood, and yet it was not pacified; he brought the children out of the school and slew them upon it, and yet it was not quiet. So that he slew upon it 94,000, and yet it was not quiet. He drew near to it himself and said, "O Zacharias, Zacharias! thou hast destroyed the best of thy people, would you have me destroy them all?" Then it was quiet and did not bubble any more. *Talmud*, quoted by *Lightfoot*, on Matt. xxiii. 35.

¹ 2 Kings xii. 17. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

of his predecessors. Forced to justify his usurpation by restoring the honour of his kingdom, which had suffered greatly from the inglorious reign of Benhadad II., he threw his whole energies into wars of conquest, and won himself a name worshipped by his countrymen almost with divine honours as late as the Christian era.¹ The weakness and confusion attending the changes of dynasty in Israel had, during long periods, made vigorous defence against foreign enemies impossible. Jeroboam, Baasha, and Omri, had alike been forced to resign more or less territory at the beginning of their reign, and Jehu, in the same way, in spite of his signal ability, soon after his accession, had to see the whole region east of the Jordan seized and annexed for the time to the kingdom of Damascus, by Hazael, perhaps in alliance with Tyre.² The horrors of this terrible period were long remembered. Children had been dashed on the stones, the young men ruthlessly cut down, the matrons butchered with the most appalling cruelty, and many of the men torn to pieces with the iron spikes of threshing sledges.³ Overpowered for the moment, Jehu appears to have been forced to an ignominious peace, which left his whole kingdom open to the Syrians. By this means, apparently, Hazael was able to carry his ravages as far south as Judah.⁴ There, as it would seem, with the aid of Edom and of the Phenicians, now no longer interested in a Hebrew alliance, he defeated the Jewish army, murdering the prisoners of rank, and carrying off large numbers of the population to slavery in Edom and Tyre, whence many were sold to distant nations.⁵ The destruction of

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. iv. 6.

² 2 Kings x. 32, 33.

³ 2 Kings viii. 12; x. 32, 33. Amos i. 3, 4.

⁴ 2 Kings xii. 18. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

⁵ Joel iii. 6. Amos i. 6-10.

the southern kingdom appeared, indeed, so imminent, that Jehoash was glad to buy off the enemy. All the miscellaneous gifts of the temple received since the days of Jehoshaphat were surrendered; with the other temple treasures and those of the palace that could be seized.¹ The land, besides, was plundered. Nor was calamity limited to the miseries of war. Nature itself seemed to have become an enemy. A long drought had burned up the land; the seed rotted under the clods; the threshing floors were bare, the barns fallen down, and everything green had withered away. The cattle moaned in the barren, iron-bound pastures; the flocks wandered about in distress for water; flames of fire seemed to have swept over the land, and the very streams were everywhere dried up.²

But still worse was in store. Locusts come only in seasons of special drought, and they now appeared in swarm upon swarm. The kingdom seemed doomed.

A contemporary picture of the visitation fortunately survives.

“A fire devours before them; behind them glows ■ flame; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, but behind them is a desolate wilderness! They spare nothing as they pass! Like horses in their shape, they run swift as horsemen; as with the bounding noise of chariots they leap onwards over the crests of the mountains; like crackling fire when it devours the stubble; like the sword of ■ great army prepared for war. The people tremble before them, all faces grow fiery red with terror! They run like mighty men, they climb walls like men of war, every one marches straight on; no one turns from his path. No one crowds on the other; each keeps his own course. They may fall in heaps but they keep on their march, unbroken.³ They swarm through

¹ 2 Kings xii. 18.

² Joel i. 16-20.

³ Joel ii. 8 (Heb.).

the city; they climb up the walls; they make their way into the houses; they enter at the lattices, like a thief. The earth seems to quake before them, the very heavens seem to tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark, and the stars withdraw their shining.¹

The purple vine, the green fig-tree, the grey olive, the scarlet pomegranate, the golden corn, the waving palm, the fragrant citron vanished before them, and the trunks and branches were left bare and white by their devouring teeth.² God had visited His land in wrath. The great day of His judgments for their sins had come.³ The drunkard might lament the new wine thus snatched from his lips; the priests sigh over the flour offering and drink offering cut off from the house of Jehovah, for there was neither wine, nor oil, nor flour, and the altar stood black and cold. The husbandmen and vinedressers might mourn for the wheat and the barley, the vine and the fig-tree, for all the trees of the field were blasted, and joy had withered away from the sons of men.⁴

But the prophet was still a great power in the land and one appeared in this terrible hour. Joel, a priest⁵ of Jerusalem, seized with the prophetic spirit, came forward, demanding that a solemn fast should be held. All must attend—the elders, the children, the very babes,

¹ Joel ii. 3-10. Dr. Pusey thinks that the picture of the locusts was a symbolical description of the Assyrian armies. *Minor Prophets, Introd. to Joel*. In 1881 two hundred and fifty tons of locusts were buried in Cyprus, each ton numbering over 90,000,000 of these pests. *Daily News*.

² Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. ii. p. 370.

³ Deut. xxviii. 21 ff.

⁴ Joel i. 5-15.

⁵ Most authorities believe Joel to have been a priest, but Dr. Pusey thinks that he speaks of the order and of their ministrations as outside his own sphere, and that he was a layman. *Minor Prophets, Introd. to Joel*.

the bridegroom from his chamber and the bride from her closet.¹ Nor was there any hesitation. The harsh blast of the sacred horns proclaimed the assembly. The whole population approached and cast themselves on the earth with wailing supplications, in front of the altar. The priests gathered in their multitude in their own court, the space between the front, or porch of the temple, and the fireless altar,² and lay with their faces on the ground, in black sackcloth, instead of their usual white robes.³ No music of psalms or instruments rose, but in its place only the piercing cries and laments of people and priests alike. The very altar was covered with sackcloth.⁴ The people as they lay prostrate cast ashes on their heads with ceaseless cries of sorrow. The priests, spreading their black mantles⁵ before the doors of the temple, as if to show its Invisible Lord the depth of their grief, shrieked aloud, "Spare Thy people, O Lord; give not Thine heritage to reproach, lest the heathen make us a byword, and ask, Where is their God?"⁶

This strange day of humiliation appeared to be blest. A rich fall of rain came soon after;⁷ a full harvest might at last be hoped for, and the favour of God seemed returning to the refreshed land and its people. With such indications of better days, the tone of the prophet

¹ Joel ii. 16.

² The porch was a structure as broad as the temple, and half the depth. The altar, which was of brass, ran along the whole front of the temple, for it was as broad and stood out as far, and was square. 2 Chron. iii. 4; viii. 12; iv. 1. There was an open space between the porch or portico and the altar; these forming its front and back. This was the court of the priests, across which they had to go to enter the temple.

³ Joel i. 13.

⁴ Judging from Judith iv. 11.

⁵ *Fritzsche*, on Judith iv. 11.

⁶ Joel ii. 17.

⁷ Joel ii. 22.

in a second address, forming the latter half of the book which bears his name, changed from gloomy foreboding to the brightest anticipations. The locusts had come from the coast; the van of their huge army was east of Jerusalem; their centre covered Judah; their rear extended towards the "Great Sea." But mighty as this host had been, Jehovah was mightier. They might see it even now! Let the sadness be put away! The locusts would presently disappear, driven off by strong winds into the wilderness, the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean; the very air of the wilderness reeking with the stench of their bodies.

"Fear not, O land," he goes on to say,¹ "rejoice and be glad, for Jehovah has done great things! Fear no longer ye beasts of the field, for the pastures are growing green again; the tree bears its fruit; the fig and the vine yield their strength! Be glad then, ye sons of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah, your God. He has given you the autumn rain in full measure. He has poured down richly both the autumn and the spring showers! The threshing floors shall be full of wheat; the vats overflow with wine and oil, for Jehovah promises to make up to us all that the locusts—His great army—consumed. Then," he continues, in the name of God Himself, "you shall always have plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of Jehovah, your God, who has dealt so wondrously with you. Men will thus see that you are restored to My favour, and My people will never again be put to shame. Moved by your sincere repentance and humiliation at the call of My prophet, I shall return to you, and ye shall know by the blessings you enjoy that I am once more in your midst, and that I Jehovah, and none else, am your God. Nor will you, My people, ever again be put to shame.

"Nor will temporal happiness," he goes on, speaking still for Jehovah,² "be the only result of the nation turning to Me with its whole heart. When it does so, there will not be a few

¹ Joel ii. 21 ff.

² The text is paraphrased for the sake of clearness.

prophets, as now; the whole community will be filled with My Spirit. The old will have dreams by night; the young men, visions in clear day; on your very slave men and slave women, now so despised, will I pour out My Spirit."

"But while it will be thus with those who fear Me, a fearful day of wrath is in store for My enemies!¹ That day shall come with fearful signs in heaven and on earth; appearances as of blood and fire in the air; pillars of smoke like those from volcanoes; a darkening of the sun and blood-like redness in the moon.² In that day whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved, for Jerusalem and its temple shall be a refuge for all them that escape, as Jehovah has said, and among the fugitives thus saved shall be all whom Jehovah shall call.

"Hitherto," continues the human echo of the Divine voice, "Judah has been oppressed by the heathen,³ but when it has

¹ Joel ii. 30.

² The imagery is perhaps taken from the smoke and flames of war. *Diet. of the Bible*, art. *Moon*. This passage, and also Isa. xiii. 10; Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24, are thought by some to involve allusion to the mysterious awe with which eclipses were viewed by the Hebrews, in common with other nations of antiquity. The language reminds us of the signs recorded by Josephus as attending the fall of Jerusalem. "A star stood like a sword over the city; and, when the people were assembled at the Passover at the ninth hour* of the night, a light shone so strongly round the altar and the temple, that it seemed bright day, for half an hour. The eastern door of the temple, which twenty men scarcely could shut each evening, held with iron-bound bars, and very deep bolts, let into the threshold, which was one solid stone, was seen at the sixth hour† of the night to open of its own accord. Chariots and armed troops were seen through the whole country, coursing through the clouds, round the cities. At the feast of Pentecost, moreover, the priests, entering the temple by night, as was their wont, for worship, first perceived a great-movement and sound, and then heard a multitudinous voice, 'Let us depart hence.'" Jos., *De Bell. Jud.*, VI. v. 3. Euseb., *H. E.*, iii. 8. A comet was also seen for a whole year.

³ Joel iii. 1 ff.

* About three in the morning.

† About midnight.

turned thus sincerely to Me this will be made to cease. Judah has been invaded, its sons and daughters carried off, and sold as slaves to distant lands, and much innocent blood shed. All this cries for punishment. My people thus led into captivity from Judah and Jerusalem must be brought back. When I make bare My arm to do this I shall stir up all the nations who have oppressed them, to gather against Jerusalem, in the valley where Jehoshaphat gained his famous victory. But its name—'the place where Jehovah judges,' will speak of a greater triumph—the judgment of God over His enemies! I will contend with them there, for My people and My heritage Israel; My people whom they have scattered; My land which they have parted among them. I remember their doings! They cast lots for My people; they exchanged a boy for a harlot; they sold a maiden for a draught of wine! Do you think, O Tyre and Sidon, and coasts of Philistia, to contend against Me, Jehovah? Will you avenge on Me what you fancy your wrongs, suffered by the victories of My people over you in the past? Will you try to do aught against Me! Right speedily will I return your folly on your own heads! You have carried off My silver and My gold from My House;¹ you have stored up in your heathen temples My best and most prized treasures; you have sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the sons of Greece,² to take them far from their country!"

"Behold, I will bring them back from the place to which you have sold them, and return your crime on your own heads, by

¹ 2 Kings xii. 18.

² Heb., Sons of the Javanites. The Philistines carried off the people and the Phenicians bought them. The Tyrian slavedealers followed all armies to buy the prisoners. They hung like a cloud of vultures in the rear of Alexander's march, as far as the Indus. *Arr. Exped.*, vi. 22, 8. They attended Nicanor's advance in the same way, 1000 of them assembling at the camp of Gorgias "with silver and gold very much, to buy the children of Israel as slaves," and with chains to bind them. *Jos., Ant.*, XII. vii. 3. They gathered also in the rear of the Roman armies in great numbers. *Hieron.*, on Ezek. xxvii. 16. Children would not pay for transport and were abandoned to perish. The demand in Greece for slaves was enormous; 10,000 were bought and sold in one day at

giving your sons and daughters in their stead, as slaves into the hands of the sons of Judah, who will sell them to the Sabeans of Arabia, a people far off! I, Jehovah, have spoken it!"

Roused by this anticipation, the prophet seems to feel the battle already at hand, and animates his countrymen to the struggle.

"Dismiss then," says he, "your fears.¹ Proclaim aloud among the heathen how little we dread them; how we await their approach! Ye mighty men of Judah, arouse! Ye men of war come on to the strife! Beat your ploughshares into swords; your pruning hooks into spears; let even the weak say, 'I am a hero.'

"Muster, all ye nations round, and assemble yourselves and advance! Lead down Thy mighty ones against them, O Jehovah, the Captain of the Host of Thy people, from Thy height of Zion!

"Let the nations be roused; let them come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there shall I, Jehovah, sit, to judge all the peoples round.

"Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest of vengeance is ripe. Come, get you down, ye warriors of Judah, from your heights; for your enemies are gathered like the heaped up grapes in the winepress, and are ready for treading; the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for as their sins are great so also will be their destruction.

"Terrible beyond words will be the tumult in the valley of judgment,² when the near approaching day of Jehovah arrives! Then shall be seen the signs that I have foretold as marking that great day of God—the darkening of sun and moon and stars! Jehovah, also, shall thunder out of Zion, His habitation, and cry aloud from Jerusalem, shaking the heavens and the earth!

"But, amidst all, Jehovah will be a refuge for His people; a strong fortress for the sons of Israel. Thus shall ye know that I, Jehovah, am your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain.

the slave market of Delos; and Athens, Egina and Corinth, in the day of their prosperity, had, between them, 1,330,000 slaves. See authorities in *Pusey*. ¹ Joel iii. 9. The translation is amplified, for clearness. ² *De Wette*, "threshing."

Then shall Jerusalem be undefiled and holy, and heathen aliens will no more invade her.¹

“After that day there shall never again be such want as there has been in times past. The mountains and hills will flow with wine and milk; the watercourses, now so often dry, will be filled with perennial streams; and a spring from the temple will fertilize the now barren land, even to the Valley of the Acacias!² Egypt, on the other hand, will be turned into a desolation, and Edom into a barren waste, for their cruelty to the sons of Judah, and for the innocent blood of my people they have shed in their bounds.³

“But Judah shall continue for ever; Jerusalem from generation to generation. And I will avenge on their enemies their blood which I have not avenged⁴ already, and Jehovah will reign in Zion!”⁵

Such were two public addresses of the oldest Hebrew prophet whose utterances have come down to us in any fulness: addresses the like of which no nation besides ever heard. A sense deeper and fuller than Joel dreamed lay in the inspired words he was chosen to utter, for St. Peter tells us that “the prophets enquired and searched

¹ The foreign relations of the monarchy since the conquests of heathen territory by David, and the vast spread of trade and intercourse under Solomon and his successors, had brought a large alien and heathen element into Jerusalem. Judea had, moreover, been already humbled by Shishak and by the Philistines and Arabs. All this was to cease.

² The only locality known by the name Shittim is the one opposite Jericho, in Moab. The *Sept.* has “the Valley of Rushes,” as if indicating a torrent bed, often at least partially dry.

³ Egypt was then great and powerful. What it has been for ages is known to all. If the river maintain the richness of the soil, man has sunk, even amidst its fertility, to the lowest degradation. Within the last year or two great numbers of peasants died of starvation, their crops having been being carried off by the Khedive. The desolation of Edom is a by-word even in the East.

⁴ *De Wette. Arnheim and Sachs. Zunz.*

⁵ Joel iii. 21.

diligently what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.”¹ We who enjoy fuller light know that prophecy had a grander significance than the merely temporary or local,² though, when first spoken its distant and spiritual scope could hardly have been realized.

The glowing visions of temporal prosperity were doomed to remain unfulfilled, for the nation did not, by a true and lasting reformation, act up to the conditions on which it was promised. But Joel, and perhaps other unrecorded prophets of that day, had not spoken in vain. Following as they did the religious revolution brought about by Jehoiada, the people were roused to a deeper seriousness; the old heroic spirit was rekindled; Jehovah was once more honoured as the King of Israel and its Leader in peace and war. The altered moral tone showed itself in a striking reaction from the feebleness of the past, for under Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham, Judah rose once more to a pitch of honour and prosperity which almost recalled the golden age of David.

It may, indeed, have been from a perverted religiousness that the troubled reign of Jehoash closed by his murder. Weak and easily led, he had listened, as we have seen, after the death of Jehoiada, to the small but influential heathen party, the remnant of Athaliah's court, and had re-introduced the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. Still worse, he had allowed the high priest Zechariah, the son of him to whom he had owed his throne, to be stoned to death in the very precincts of the temple, for nobly protesting against his craven apostasy. The vengeance foretold by the martyr had not been long delayed. Hazael's invasion of Judah and the degrading tribute by which he had been turned back from the gates of

¹ 1 Peter i. 11.

² Acts ii. 16 ff.

Jerusalem had made Jehoash equally despised and hated. Thus marked, as it seemed, by the judgments of God; humbled before his enemies; guilty of the murder of a venerated high priest in the temple itself and during the holy offices; apostate, moreover, from the ancient worship; fanatics were not wanting to mete out to him the doom he had inflicted on Zechariah. Judah and Israel, alike, had become familiar with the murder of kings, and the fate of Jehoash was in keeping with the spirit of the times. Two inmates, or "servants" of the palace—sons respectively of an Ammonitess and a Moabitess,¹—headed a conspiracy before which he fell, in the forty-seventh year of his life and the fortieth of his reign. His apostasy, his crimes, and perhaps, above all, his want of success as a king, had left him no friends. Even a burial in the royal tombs was denied him, though he was allowed to rest within the city walls.²

Jehoash had lived eighteen or twenty years after the death of Jehu,³ and the invasion by Hazael must have taken place in the twenty-fourth year of his reign,⁴ while Jehoahaz was king of Israel.⁵ The politics of these times are simply a reflection of the aggressiveness or quiet of the armies of Assyria. But Shalmaneser II. left little rest for the western countries of Asia. In the eighteenth year of his reign, he tells us,⁶ "I crossed the Euphrates for the sixteenth time. Hazael, of the land of Aram (Syria), trusting to the strength of his army, assembled it

¹ The name of one of the conspirators is Jozachar in 2 Kings xii. 21, but in 2 Chron. xxiv. 26 it is given as Zabab. The MSS., however, show this to be a mere clerical error.

² 2 Kings xii. 12. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23-25.

³ According to the present Biblical chronology, Jehu died in 855. Jehoash in 837.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

⁵ In his second year.

⁶ Layard's *Inscriptions*, pl. 92.

in countless numbers, and entrenched himself in the tops of the mountains, on the edge of the Lebanon range. "I fought with him and gained a great victory, taking 16,000 of his soldiers with their arms; 1,121 of his chariots; 410 cavalry soldiers, and all his baggage. To save his life he fled, and I pursued him. I besieged him in Damascus, his capital, and destroyed its towers. I then marched to the hills of the Haurân and destroyed, laid desolate, and burned with fire, towns without number, and led away innumerable prisoners. I then marched to the mountains near the Mediterranean, and set up my royal likeness there. At that time I received tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and from Jehu, the son of Omri."¹

The hideous savagery of which the Great King boasts in the narrative of his campaigns might well strike terror into all weak States, and make them eager to purchase immunity from invasion by becoming his tributary vassals. He tells us that he swept all hostile lands like a whirlwind, slew all the fighting men of cities that opposed him, built pyramids of heads at the town gates, burned alive the sons and daughters of the chief men, and spread devastation and death.² He glories in having raised no fewer than five of his ghastly scull-pyramids. Three years after his first attack on Hazael, he invaded Syria again and destroyed more of its towns, afterwards marching to the coast to receive the tribute of Tyre,

¹ Obelisk Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. v. pp. 34, 41. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 107-8. Jehu is called "the son of Omri," either from ignorance on the part of the Assyrians that he had massacred Omri's descendants, or simply in reference to his inheriting the royal dignity which they had formerly known as held by Omri. On the Monuments, etc., at the Nahr el Kelb, see *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vii. p. 331 ff.

² Monolith Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. pp. 84-100. *Menant*, p. 100.

Sidon and Gebal, which seems to have been left unpaid.¹

That Jehu should have become the vassal of Assyria, as is twice recorded by Shalmaneser, was apparently the



THE OBELISK OF SHALMANESER II.

¹ Obelisk Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 35. *Menant*, p. 101. *Schrader*, p. 105. Shalmaneser had led 120,000 men against Benhadad and the Syrian league. This gives us an idea of the size of his armies. *Menant*, p. 117. Hazael had been designated to the throne of Damascus by Elisha about the same time as Jehu gained that of Samaria. *Menant* thinks the death of Ahab happened in the year B.C. 853. Adding fourteen years for the reigns of Ahaziah and Joram, this would make the accession of Jehu fall in the year 839, instead of 833 as by the common reckoning. *Menant*, p. 118.

only course left to him if he desired to escape utter destruction from Syria on the one hand, or Assyria on the other. By doing homage to the Great King he at once secured his territories from invasion, and obtained protection against Hazael, though such an alliance would naturally embitter the fierce Syrian, and may have been the immediate cause of his repeated attacks. These, however, brought down on him the wrath of Shalmaneser, as an outrage on one of his vassals, and thus in the end effectually crippled Damascus.¹

The famous obelisk on which the fact of Jehu's



becoming tributary to Assyria is recorded, is of black basalt, and is about seven feet high, and two feet broad at the base. On each side, sculptures, in five compartments, fill about half the space, the rest being covered with the royal annals. One of the subjects depicted is, fortunately, the payment of tribute by Jehu, and thus we have a glimpse of the details of life in Israel in his time. The tribute bearers are represented in robes elaborately fringed, and reaching almost to the feet. They wear hats

¹ Jehu's alliance with Assyria was an anticipation of what happened in the reigns of Pekah and Ahaz except that Ahaz took the place of Jehu, while Pekah allied himself with Syria against Judah, in revenge for this.

almost like Phrygian bonnets; their arms are bare from the elbow; and their beards and hair elaborately curled, like those of the Assyrians. They bring bars of silver and gold; gold in plates; gold table utensils; gold drinking vessels, and others, also of gold, for lifting wine from the great central vase in which it was mixed at banquets; bars of lead; a sceptre for the Great King; spears, etc.¹ Dress and personal adornment were thus as carefully studied in those days as now; the textile arts flourished, with all the trades this implies, and life in the upper ranks had not a little of the splendour of modern times, as well as abundant conveniences, comforts and even luxuries. It would seem indeed that Samaria could even boast of a metal coinage, for a coin lately noticed in the British Museum appears to belong to Jehu's reign. The characters on it resemble exactly those on the Moabite stone, except that they are drawn more perfectly. Jehu is represented as standing in a "winged chariot," his name appearing round the edge of the coin, over his head.²

The influence of Elijah acting through his successor had triumphed in the revolution Jehu effected, but there was no such improvement in the national fortunes as might have been expected. Henceforward, indeed, notwithstanding temporary gleams of prosperity, the history of Israel is one of steadily advancing decay. An external reformation had been brought about by physical force, but it left the morals of the people as before. It was to little effect, therefore, that the foreign element in religion and politics had been cast out, or the kingdom again set in a measure on its original basis. Jehovah might

¹ Inscription on the Obelisk. Schrader's Translation. *Keil-inschr.*, 106.

² *Pal. Fund Report*, 1881, p. 19.

be once more honoured, but it was in connection with the calves of Bethel and Dan. Jeroboam's sanctuary at the former was still honoured as the "king's chapel" and "the royal" or "national temple."¹ The strength of Samaria again became the popular boast.² Israel and Judah no longer cultivated the close relations that had marked the dynasty of Omri. Yet the prophets acted for the time in harmony with the rulers, and the popular liberties were more respected than in the past. It was of signal advantage, moreover, to the kingdom, that Elisha, the founder of the new royal house, lived for about forty-five years after its accession,³ to guide and counsel it. But he did so without taking any prominent part in public affairs; devoting himself, apparently, in the main, to the great task of superintending the schools of the prophets, which we often find him visiting.⁴

After a reign of twenty-eight years, Jehu⁵ died at Samaria and was buried there; Jehoahaz⁶ his son, ascending the vacant throne.⁷ Jehoash,⁸ of Judah, was now a man of about twenty-seven, and had still eighteen or twenty years to reign, but we are not told the age of Jehoahaz. The seventeen years of his rule saw Israel reduced by Hazael to the lowest depression. Constant inroads of the Syrians drove the population from their homes;⁹ a number of towns west of the Jordan were taken;¹⁰ and the Moabites and others made constant forays from the east.

¹ Amos vii. 13.

² Amos vi. 1.

³ Ewald *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 54.

⁴ See p. 116.

⁵ = "Jehovah is HE."

⁶ = "Whom Jehovah upholds."

⁷ Keil thinks that Jehu died in the twenty-second year of Jehoash of Judah, not the twenty-third as in 2 Kings xiii. 1. *Kommentar*. Josephus thinks it was in the twenty-first year.

⁸ = "The gift of Jehovah."

⁹ 2 Kings xiii. 5.

¹⁰ 2 Kings xiii. 25.

Things had indeed sunk very low. The whole of Gilead and Bashan as far south as the Arnon was in the hands of Syria,¹ and Hazael even forced Jehoahaz to reduce his army to no more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots, with 10,000 infantry. The northern kingdom was, in fact, well nigh destroyed. Its people were haughtily trodden under foot, like the dust, by their oppressor.² Three years before the death of Jehoash of Judah, Jehoahaz was succeeded by his son Joash, who was able somewhat to revive the fortunes of his country. Living on the most cordial terms with the aged Elisha, who still survived as his truest counsellor and the surest protector of the kingdom,³ he set himself earnestly to deliver it from its overwhelming difficulties. Hazael had died about the same time as Jehoahaz, and had been succeeded by his son Benhadad III., previously the commander of his armies⁴; a man apparently much inferior in ability to his father. Fortunately for Israel, the power of Syria was already broken by Assyria, but it was still greatly to be dreaded. From across the Jordan other assailants, also, multiplied. Eager to wrest part of the eastern territory from Syria, for their own benefit, the Ammonites ravaged Gilead, committing the most frightful atrocities.⁵ Every spring, bands of Moabites crossed the Jordan and laid waste the country.⁶ But the sixteen years of the reign of Joash saw the breaking of these heavy clouds. Among those who had not despaired of their country Elisha had always stood first, and now, in his last days, he was able to foresee the turn of the national

¹ 2 Kings x. 32, 32.

² *Ibid.*, xiii. 7.

³ Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 52.

⁴ 2 Kings xiii. 3, 24. There is no mention of Benhadad III. in the Assyrian inscriptions.

⁵ Amos i. 13.

⁶ 2 Kings xiii. 20.

fortunes. Struck with mortal sickness, he was visited by the king, whose grandfather he had set on the throne. Under Ahab, the prophets had been driven from the land; but Joash came to ask Elisha's farewell counsels and receive his parting blessing. Bending over him, he wept at losing "the chariot of Israel and its horsemen;" for the dying man had been the true defence and glory of the kingdom. But the patriotism of the seer still glowed as warmly as ever. As he lay near the lattice window for coolness, he made Joash open it, and told him to bend his bow, the favourite weapon of the age, toward the east—the direction of Damascus. Then raising himself from his couch, he laid his own feeble hands on those of the king, and bade him shoot. The act was intended as a sign of approaching deliverance. Three arrows were sped, but the king should have emptied his quiver. It was a fatal error. Had he gone on, said Elisha, he would have destroyed Syria utterly; as it was, he would gain three victories over it.¹ One of these was won on the same field, at Aphek,² as had seen the defeat of Benhadad II.; the scene of the others is not given, but the result of the whole was the recovery of the towns on the west of the Jordan, wrested by Hazael from king Jehoahaz.³

Joash had not however to fight with Syria and the bands of Moab and Ammon only. In the third year of his reign a new king had ascended the throne of Judah—Amaziah, the son of Jehoash,—a man in his early prime, for he was only twenty-five at his accession.⁴ Of a brave and enterprising spirit, and true to Jehovah for the greater part of his reign, he wanted the solidity and

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 14–19.

² Conder and Merrill place Aphek on the east bank of the Lake of Galilee. See p. 84.

³ 2 Kings xiii. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv. 1. 2 Chron. xxv. 1.

calmness which his position demanded. His first act after being firmly seated on the throne boded well. Arresting the palace servants who had murdered his father, he put them to death; but it is especially noted that he spared their children, in obedience to the humane law in Deuteronomy, which forbade a man's offspring being punished for their father's crime.¹ David had felt himself compelled by popular opinion to give up the sons of Saul to death for their father's offence, and the sons of Naboth had been killed with their father; but a better tone of feeling was slowly awaking.²

Edom had been independent for the last fifty years,³ but Amaziah determined once more to subdue it. Summoning the whole muster of fighting men of Judah, therefore, he invaded its territory, and defeated its army in the Salt Valley, at the south of the Dead Sea. Utterly worsted, the Edomites were incapable of any further active resistance. Under a late king they had built or rather excavated a new capital in one of the southern defiles of their mountains—the strange rock-hewn city of Selah—"the rock," or Petra. Lying, as it did, more than 4,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, at a distance of about 70 miles from the lower end of the Dead Sea, and approached only by a series of ascents, they fancied they were secure in its shelter against foreign attacks. Dwelling literally in "the clefts of the rock," they boasted in their pride that no one could bring them down from their high retreat.⁴ But Amaziah resolved to make it his own. By a bold march he seized and

¹ Deut. xxiv. 16. If this book be so late a production how is it thus referred to in Kings?

² See it advocated by Jeremiah and Ezekiel at a later time. Jer. xxxi. 30. Ezek. xviii. 23.

³ Since the reign of Jehoram of Judah.

⁴ Obad. i. 3.

plundered it; changing its name to Joktheel—in noble confession that it had been “subdued by God.” Yet the war must have been marked by a ferocity equal to that of any of the nations round. Ten thousand Edomites had been killed in the battle at the Dead Sea, but 10,000 prisoners who had been taken, were marched on to Petra and there hurled over the precipices and “broken in pieces.”¹ Rich plunder of flocks and herds, and probably of other forms of wealth, rewarded and increased the vain glory of the conqueror. Unfortunately for himself, he carried off their gods, instead of destroying them, as David had done with those of the Philistines.² Brought to Jerusalem, they proved his ruin. Tempted, one knows not how, to do so, he adopted them as the objects of his own worship, and burned incense before them; thus destroying his position among his subjects by the re-introduction of idolatry—especially that of the discredited gods of a people whom Jehovah had overthrown and whom they themselves abhorred.

Amaziah had hired a vast number of mercenary troops from Israel to help him in his enterprise, but having been warned by a prophet that their presence would be hurtful, since Ephraim dishonoured Jehovah by worshipping the calves, he dismissed them, forfeiting the 100 talents he had paid for their assistance. Enraged at this affront, they had avenged it on their way back, by plundering the cities of Judah through which they passed; 3,000 men falling in defence of their homes.³ Nothing would

¹ 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12. In 2 Kings xiv. 7, the name Joktheel is said to have continued “unto this day.” As Amaziah’s conquest, however, was lost in the reign of Ahaz, less than a century after—the narrative in the Book of Kings must have been written very soon indeed after the event. This is to be noted.

² See vol. iii. p. 208.

³ 2 Chron. xxv. 6–10, 13.

satisfy Amaziah but war with Joash to retrieve his honour, thus wounded. Confident in his victorious army, he would listen to no dissuasion, though Joash with kindly but half contemptuous irony strove to show him his folly. "The thistle of Lebanon," said he, "sent to the cedar of Lebanon, demanding its daughter as wife to the thistle's son; but presently a wild beast, chancing to pass by, trode the vain thistle under foot."¹ "Abide at home," added he; "why shouldst thou meddle, to thy hurt." Such a strain of rebuke, however, only made Amaziah the more determined. He was resolved to "see Joash to the face," and he did so, soon after, to his grief. A battle fought on the borders, at Beth-shemesh, resulted in his utter defeat; he himself being taken prisoner. His army being dispersed, Jerusalem lay open to Joash. Thither therefore he marched, taking the captive Amaziah with him. Once more the holy city felt the calamities of war. The temple and the palace were sacked; hostages taken; the city plundered; and its wall broken down for a space of about 600 feet. But Amaziah was treated with a generosity rare in that age. Instead of dethroning him and annexing his kingdom, Joash restored him; contented with the glory of having been the first king of Israel who had taken Jerusalem. Amaziah lived fifteen years after his captor, but the deep misery he had brought on the land was never forgotten, and popular discontent at last broke out in an open revolt of Jerusalem, from which he fled to Lachish.² Pursued thither, he was seized and put to death; the poor honour being done his remains of bringing them back "upon horses" to Jerusalem, for burial in the royal tombs.

¹ 2 Chron. xxv. 18, 19.

² A specially strong city.



CHAPTER VII.

THE INDIAN SUMMER OF ISRAEL.

KING OF ISRAEL.

JEROBOAM II. B.C. 823-770.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

AMAZIAH B.C. 837-808.

UZZIAH „ 808-757.¹

JONAH.—AMOS.

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

SAMSI-BIN B.C. 823-811. **BINNIRARI**, 810-872.

SHALMANESER III. 781-772. **ASSUR-DAN-ILI**, 771-754.

THE days of Israel's deepest depression, under Jehoahaz, had driven that king to seek help from Jehovah, the God of his fathers, and his reign had, in answer, been brightened by the promise of a great deliverer.² A gleam of sunshine had since then broken through the clouds, in the victories of Joash over the Syrians. But it was in his son and successor Jeroboam II., the great-grandson of Jehu—well named after the founder of the kingdom, that the prophecy received its complete fulfilment. Cultivating friendly relations with Judah, or at least safe from its attacks, holding as he still

¹ Schrader points out that these figures are uncertain, since Uzziah was certainly alive in B.C. 740. There was a total eclipse of the sun, visible at Jerusalem, in 784. It was at its full about 1 p.m. *Michaelis*, quoted by Hitzig, *Amos*, p. 130. Another also occurred in B.C. 803.

² 2 Kings xiii. 4, 5.

did the hostages given to his father by Amaziah, as pledges of its good behaviour;¹ he was free to turn his arms against the foreign enemies of his country. Little is told of his character or of his wars, but the extent of his conquests and the glory to which he raised his country, mark him as the greatest of all the kings who reigned in Samaria. It seemed indeed as if the times of David had come back.² The northern empire of Solomon was restored. From Hamath on the Orontes, to the wady of the Arabah,³ south of the Dead Sea, his sway was acknowledged. Moab and Ammon were reconquered and made tributary, under native princes. The Valley of the Willows, on the border of Edom, became the southern boundary of Israel.⁴ Ammon had long harassed the territory of the Eastern tribes which was not in the hands of the Syrians, and its ferocious cruelties had roused the wildest indignation. But to use the words of Amos, "fire was now kindled" in the wall of Rabbah, and its palaces burned down; the king and princes falling into the hands of the victors.⁵ Moab had in part recovered itself since the raising of the siege of Kir Haraseth, and not only refused to pay the tribute imposed by David, but, as has been noticed, sent bands of its troops, yearly, into the Israelite territory, burning and slaying all before them. The vigour of Jeroboam soon, however, tamed their boldness. An out-

¹ 2 Kings xiv. 14.

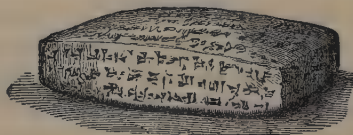
² It marks the uncertainty of the Old Testament chronology, that while the Authorized Version states that Jeroboam II. reigned 41 years (2 Kings xiv. 23), Graetz makes his reign 61 years, and Ewald 53. Schenkel adheres to the 41 years of the Hebrew text. Kleinert reckons it at 51 years.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 25. Amos vi. 14.

⁴ Isaiah xv. 7. Amos vi. 14.

⁵ Amos i. 13-15.

rage committed on a king of Edom, whose bones they burned to dust,¹ aided him, by rousing the Edomites to a fierce thirst for vengeance which made them his allies. Terrible recollections of the war passed down to future times. Wailing filled all the towns and cities of Moab, for neither stronghold, nor valley, nor upland escaped the spoiler. Flight to the wilderness was the only hope. Men hid themselves in the clefts and caves of the hills, like doves that nestle in the holes of the rocks.² Women, cast out of their cities, like birds from their nest, crouched together at the fords of the Arnon.³ Fire and sword desolated the land.⁴ The population was slain,



CLAY TABLET WITH INSCRIPTIONS, ASSYRIA.

scattered, or dragged away as slaves: the very vines, and cornfields, and pastures were destroyed.

Syria, the great hereditary enemy of Israel, already weakened by the Assyrian campaigns against Benhadad II., had been still more so by further troubles from the Euphrates, before the accession of Jeroboam; making

¹ Amos ii. 1. *Lit.*, lime. See p. 197.

² Jer. xlviii. 28.

³ Isa. xvi. 2.

⁴ In Isaiah xvi. 13, it is expressly said that the prophecy there given is quoted from an older prophet, very probably Jonah, who is mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25, as having roused Jeroboam to his great undertakings. Jeremiah applies it to his own time, chap. xlviii. Schenkel (art. *Jeroboam II.*, in *Bibel-Lex.*) thinks Isaiah chaps. xv. and xvi. are Jonah's. Cheyne thinks they are not Isaiah's but an older prophet's, though he does not mention Jonah.

it comparatively easy for Joash, his father, to resist it successfully. There is no mention, in the inscriptions, of Benhadad III., the son and successor of Hazael, but both Syria and Palestine trembled before Binnirari;¹ the second Assyrian king after Shalmaneser II. In the reign of Joash he had invaded "the sea coast," and after taking Damascus, had reduced its king Mariha,—“the lord”—to vassalage. “I marched” says he, “against the country of the Khatti (Hittites) and took Mariha, their king, in the town of Damascus, his capital. Profound fear of Assur, my lord, seized him. He embraced my knees and made submission. I imposed on him a tribute of 2,300 talents of silver, 10 talents of gold, 3,000 talents of copper, 4,000 talents of iron, and of a buantity of woollen and cotton cloths and fabrics. I took the standard and the royal umbrella² and the vast wealth of his treasures—all, in fact, that was in Damascus—both in the city itself and in the palace.” He boasts, moreover, of having laid under tribute and re-united to his empire, Phenicia, including both Tyre and Sidon—the land of Omri—that is, the kingdom of Israel,—the land of Edom, and the land of Palestine,³ to the Western Ocean.⁴

The reign of Jeroboam is marked by the fragment of

¹ Samsi Bin was the immediate successor of Shalmaneser II. He reigned from 823 to 811, but was crippled by a rebellion of his brother. When this was quelled, however, he undertook campaigns to the north, east and south, and last of all to the west. But he did not exert any great influence on the western nations. Binnirari reigned from 810 to 782.

² Seen over the head of the kings of Assyria in the sculptures.

³ This is the first time the word Palestine occurs in the Assyrian inscriptions. It means, apparently, the country of the Philistines.

⁴ *Menant*, p. 127. *Keilinschriften*, p. 113.

sacred literature known as the Book of Jonah¹ which throws a striking light on the greatness of Assyria, when the prophet went on his mission to it. That he should have been sent on such an errand of mercy to a great heathen city, is specially interesting as the first prominent expression of the Divine love to all mankind, found in the Old Testament. The very harshness and exclusive narrowness of the prophet himself, heightens the charm of the narrative. God has pity on the great city, although idolatrous, but Jonah is unwilling to carry a message of love outside his own nation. His very conceptions of the Almighty, show the imperfect ideas of his time. He thinks to escape from Him by leaving Palestine for a region beyond the sea. And even when forced on his journey, his Jewish bigotry shows itself in his anger that a heathen population should have averted its threatened doom by a timely repentance.

A notice in the Book of Kings,² throws an incidental light on the life of the prophet. He must have been prominent among his order in these stormy times, for we find him the counsellor of Jeroboam in a policy

¹ The Book of Jonah may not have been actually written by the prophet himself, who was a contemporary of Jeroboam II. Bleek supposes that from Nineveh being mentioned in chap. iii. 3, apparently as a city of the past, the composition could not have been before B.C. 626-606. *Einleitung*, vol. ii. p. 116. Kleinert thinks its Hebrew indicates that it was written in the period of Ezekiel's ministry. *Jonah*, p. 19. Dr. Gustav Baur, in *Riehm*, fancies its language shows it to date from the Captivity. Naegelsbach, in *Herzog*, gives no opinion respecting its date, contenting himself with saying that expositions variously assign it to different periods between B.C. 771 and the time of the Maccabees. It need hardly be added that this scholar is intensely evangelical. But the actual date at which "Jonah" was written for insertion in the Canon has nothing to do with its inspiration.

² 2 Kings xiv. 25.

of vigour against Syria. Enthusiastically patriotic, the depression of Israel weighed on his heart. But he did not despair of his country even in its darkest hour. It was under the protection of Jehovah and must rise again, if it repented and returned to its invisible King. With keen insight into the capacity of the new ruler in Samaria, he recognized him as the deliverer promised by God to save His chosen people, and animated him to take the field against the long dreaded enemy, by the inspired assurance that he would be victorious, and would even extend the narrow limits of Israel wellnigh to the grandeur of David's empire; from Hamath in the northern valley of Lebanon, on the Orontes, to the south of the Dead Sea.¹

Intense sympathy with his race, who had suffered so much from Damascus and Assyria, doubtless lay at the root of the prophet's aversion to the mission on behalf of Nineveh, divinely intrusted to him. In his eyes the heathen were only to be trampled under foot as the enemies of Jehovah. A day of God such as Joel had lately predicted, when they would be trodden like grapes in the winepress of the wrath of the Almighty, was their just doom. Another century was needed before Micah and Isaiah could realize that they were hereafter to turn to Jehovah and go up to the mountain of His House from every land.²

Hurrying down from the hills of Galilee to Joppa, the one port of Israel, to flee as far west as possible, rather

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 1. Gath-hepher where Jonah was born, is now the village of Meshed, "the monument," so called from the supposed tomb of the prophet. It is in the ancient territory of Zebulon. The Jewish tradition, that Jonah was the son of the widow of Sarepta, has no historical basis.

² Mic. iv. 1. Isa. ii. 2. Ezek. xvii. 22, 23.

than go on an errand of mercy to the abhorred oppressor of his nation, we see the prophet eagerly taking his passage in a Tyrian Tarshish-ship lying in the harbour. The narrative that follows has an antique simplicity in every line. Weary with excitement and travel, he sinks into deep sleep as the vessel weighs anchor. But a sudden storm, so common in the Levant, breaks on the voyagers when only a little way out. The rowers do their best, but are speedily helpless. Part of the cargo is thrown overboard, to guard against foundering, but the waves trample over the decks and seem to claim the ship as their prey. All hope is lost if the heavens do not aid. In their despair, each sailor implores the succour of his own god. Still the ship rolls and welters in the storm. At last, by his own request, the prophet, conscience stricken, is cast into the sea as an offering to appease the Divine wrath, and the storm abates.

Explanations of the wonderful deliverance that followed have often been vouchsafed. That there are sea-beasts who can swallow a man entire is beyond a doubt. The white shark, which sometimes measures 30 feet long, is quite able to do so. Captain King, in his "Survey of Australia," says that he caught one which could have swallowed a man with the greatest ease. Blumenbach even states that a whole horse has been found in this kind of shark, and Basil Hall tells us that he discovered in one, besides other things, the whole skin of a buffalo, which had been thrown overboard a short time before. Ruysch says that the whole body of a man in armour has been taken from the stomach of such a shark. It is not uncommon in the Mediterranean, and is met with also in the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. It is affirmed by naturalists that sharks have the power of throwing up again, whole and alive, the prey they have

seized.¹ "I have heard," says Mr. Darwin, "from Dr. Allen of Forres, that he has frequently seen a Diodon² floating alive and distended in the stomach of a shark; and that on several occasions he has known it cut its way out, not only through the coats of the stomach, but through the sides of the monster, which has been thus killed." But all this does not account for the facts related of Jonah. It is, in fact, impossible to explain them by merely natural means. Yet his preservation was certainly not more miraculous than that of Shadrach and his companions in the "burning fiery furnace."³

Shalmaneser II. had died in the year 824, and was succeeded by his son Samsi-bin, after a civil war of seven years with one of his brothers. Though energetic and devoted to war, he had to contend with so many revolts of his eastern and northern provinces, that there is no trace on the few inscriptions he has left, of his having troubled the Jews, on the far west of his empire.⁴ Dying after a reign of thirteen years, he was followed by king Binnirari, who filled each season with a fresh campaign, in many cases, however, against revolted provinces. Internal troubles had, in fact, been rife ever since the reign of Shalmaneser II., and were destined to grow steadily more serious, till they came to a head, some time later, in a wide rebellion which shook the empire to its

¹ Couch's *History of Fishes*, vol. i. p. 33.

² Diodon—the "globe fish," so called from its power of distending its stomach into a great globe. It is also called the porcupine fish, from the spines with which it is covered. Its jaws are like the beak of a parrot, and are provided with a hard tooth-like edge to crush shells, etc. The sun fish belongs to this family.

³ See art. *Whale*, *Dict. of the Bible*. Dr. Pusey gives a great deal of information on this subject. *Minor Prophets*, pp. 257-9.

⁴ *Menant*, vol. i. p. 25.

foundations. Yet Binnirari was able to invade Elam and Chaldæa more than once, and to threaten the Medes. In the west, moreover, as we have seen, he crushed Damascus, and forced Phenicia, Edom, the kingdom of Israel, and "Palestine," or Philistia, to continue the tribute they had agreed to pay Shalmaneser II. After twenty-nine years of glory and trouble, however, he passed away in the year 782 B.C.,¹ and from that time till the accession of Tiglath-pileser IV., the Pul of the Scriptures, in B.C. 745, Assyria was little more than a wide sea of revolt.

It was some time during this long period of internal disquiet, perhaps towards its later years, when weakness in the throne was leading to a culmination of disturbance, that a strange figure, from the distant land of Omri,—his hair hanging long over his shoulders, his outer dress a rude sheep-skin mantle,²—appeared in Nineveh, startling every lane and square, bazaar and caravanserai, by a piercing³ monotonous wail, in the dialect of Israel, which though intelligible on the Tigris in such a brief sentence, must have seemed barbarous and uncouth. No one could tell who he was, or whence he came, but his bearing, appearance and words proclaimed him a "holy man," speaking for the

¹ Shalmaneser III. succeeded Binnirari in 781; and he himself was followed by Assur-dan-ili in 771. That prince died apparently about 754, and was succeeded by Assur-nirar, who reigned till B.C. 746. Tiglath-pileser IV. followed in 745; but the whole empire had been in a flame of insurrection for years before. Each country, indeed, was struggling for its old independence 2 Kings xv. 19, etc. This is very strikingly shown by Schrader. *Keilinschriften*, p. 124 ff. Art. *Phul*, in *Riehm*.

² I assume that Jonah was in appearance like Elijah, or one of the old school of prophets. 2 Kings i. 8. Zech. xiii. 4.

³ Jonah iii. 3. Hebrew.

gods. The effect must have been much the same as when Joshua the son of Ananus, at the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, passed through the streets of the doomed city, raising an awful burden against it. "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice against this whole people. Woe be to Jerusalem!"¹ Day after day, fresh crowds saw Jonah passing slowly along, ever and anon raising his weird cry that Nineveh would perish within six weeks. Over the vast space included in the aggregate of cities of which it was composed—from Kuyunjik and Khorsabad on the north, to Calah Keremlis on the south, nothing was heard but discourse about the strange apparition seen daily in the streets, and the awful words he uttered. Had he come when the empire was prosperous, he might have been treated with mocking laughter, even by a people so superstitious. But suddenly appearing when rebellion was chronic in many provinces; when conquest had given way to defence, and the loss of a battle might bring to their gates nations infuriated with long oppression—the words and the man alike struck them with terror.

No capital needed repentance more than Nineveh. Luxury and indulgence prevailed. The wealth torn from vast regions filled its palaces. Its pride and cruelty had become proverbial. Even its religion was embodied impurity. The prophet's cry for once smote its conscience. The alarm soon spread from the streets to the palace. Trembling attendants told the news to the great king as he sat in his sculptured audience chamber amidst his magnificent court. It came like a voice from the higher world and filled him with dismay. He, like

¹ Jos., *Bell.*, V. v. 8.

his people, was guilty. Repentance alone could save them or him. Rising from the throne, he laid aside his gorgeous robes, and putting on coarse sackcloth, threw ashes on his head, in token of profound humiliation and sorrow. Nor was even this enough. Summoning his nobles, he decreed that a solemn fast should be kept, in which neither man nor beast should eat or drink. The people must put on sackcloth, and even the beasts be wrapped in it.¹ All men were to "cry mightily to God, and turn from their evil way and from the violence that was in their hands."²

The lessons taught by the concluding portion of the Book form an era in the development of true religious feeling. A city as intensely abhorred by the Jews as Carthage was by Rome, or France, under the elder Napoleon, by Germany, had been pardoned by God as the result of the evangelical mission of one of their race. It could no longer be claimed that Jehovah was exclusively their God. The bitter narrowness of later Judaism was anticipated and condemned. The universal brotherhood of man taught by our Lord was foreshadowed. That a Jew, moreover, should thus have involuntarily brought mercy to the enemies of his nation, enforced the true conception of that boundless sympathy of man with man, which makes the Good Samaritan a type of the spirit of Christianity. The withering of the prophet's gourd, with the regrets it excited, strikes home in all ages, as it must have done in Jonah's day, the contrast

¹ *Herodotus*, ix. 24, tells us that in the mourning for Masistius, a little before the battle of Platæa, the Persian troops not only shaved off their own hair, but shaved also their horses and beasts of burden. It is a relic of the feeling which marked Nineveh, that in our stately funerals the horses wear trappings of black cloth.

² *Jonah* iii. 7, 8.

between the infinite love of heaven and the selfish coldness of man. The growth of a night¹ can be pitied when it touches ourselves; but unspeakably higher claims too often awaken no tenderness where we are not personally concerned.

While Damascus, on the east of the northern kingdom, had been weakened by the attacks of Assyria when Jeroboam II. began his reign, Phenicia, on the west, had suffered from internal feuds. Civil wars, which in the end led to the flight of Elissa, or Dido, to Africa, where she founded Carthage in B.C. 812,² had broken the power of Tyre, now, like Samaria, a tributary of Assyria, and secured Israel from its co-operation with her enemies. The circumstances of her neighbour thus favoured her recovery of political importance under so vigorous and able a ruler. Nor were matters less propitious in the south. Uzziah, now king of Judah, while avoiding such dangerous relations with Jeroboam as those of his predecessors with the house of Omri, lived at peace with one so able and powerful. The citizens of the northern kingdom had free intercourse with those of the southern. Pilgrimages to the ancient sanctuary at Beersheba, where calf worship like that at Dan and Bethel seems to have been practised, came into fashion,³ and, in all probability,

¹ The palma christi, or castor oil plant. *Bleek. Pusey. Robinson* (vol. i. p. 553), says it still grows to a large size in the Jordan valley. Its growth is wonderfully rapid in any case, though here it was miraculous. It rises to the height of an olive tree. "On warm days, when a small rain falls, black caterpillars are generated in great numbers on this plant, which, in one night, so often and so suddenly cut off its leaves, that only their bare ribs remain." Quotation in *Pusey*. The caterpillar in the Assyrian *Ricinus* may be different, but the illustration of rapid destruction is striking.

² *Mövers*, vol. ii. pt. i. 362, pt. ii. 150. ³ *Amos* v. 5; viii. 14.

a few faithful souls from time to time attended the temple services at Jerusalem. Jehovah had at last given "Israel a Saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians;" and they were now able, after many distracted and wretched years, "to dwell peaceably in their homes, as beforetime."¹

Under the reign of Jeroboam II., the material prosperity of his noble kingdom rose to a height it had never previously known. Samaria grew rich from the booty of the wars and the profits of commerce and trade. Mansions of hewn stone rose on every side; the inner walls, in many cases, in imitation of Ahab's palace, covered with plates of ivory brought from Africa by the Phenicians;² and the chambers fitted up with couches and furniture of the same rare material.³ Cool houses for the hot season; others, warmer, for winter, became a fashion.⁴ Pleasant vineyards attached to them covered the slopes of the hills.⁵ It was the Indian or St. Martin's summer of the northern kingdom. But as the wealth of the few accumulated, the mass of the population had grown poorer. The apparent prosperity was only a phosphorescence on decay. Intercourse with the heathen communities round; the loose morality of armies dissolved after victorious campaigns, and dispersed to their homes; the unscrupulous self-indulgence and magnificence of the rich, prompting equally unworthy means to indulge it; and the widening gulf between the upper and lower classes, were ruining the country. Above all, the old religiousness of Israel was well-nigh gone. The ox worship of Bethel and Dan had been gradually developed into a gross idolatry; Samaria and Gilgal had

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 5.

² Amos iii. 15.

³ *Ibid.* vi. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 15.

⁵ *Ibid.* v. 11.

raised calf images of their own, for local worship.¹ The great temple at Bethel, at which the king worshipped, and near which he had a palace,² boasted of a high priest, with a numerous staff, richly endowed; not poor, like the priests of Judea.³ The whole country was filled with altars,⁴ abused by superstition. As time went on, even the darker idolatries of Phenicia, which Jehu, the founder of the dynasty, had so fiercely put down, rose again everywhere. A temple to Asherah had remained from his day in Samaria, and was now re-opened.⁵ The women once more burned incense before her, as their favourite goddess, and decked themselves with their ear-rings and jewels on her feast days.⁶ Silver and gold images of Baal were set up.⁷ The smoke of sacrifices to idols rose on the tops of the mountains, and incense was burned to them on the hills, under the shade of sacred groves. The obscenities of heathenism once more polluted the land. Maidens and matrons consorted with temple harlots, and played the wanton in the name of religion.⁸ "Gilead was given to idolatry: they sacrificed to bullocks in Gilgal;" they "transgressed at Bethel and multiplied transgression at Gilgal."⁹

The country was, in fact, spoiled by prosperity, which no healthy public morality any longer controlled or directed. Society from the highest to the lowest had become corrupt. Drunkenness and debauchery spread. Wine had taken away their understanding.¹⁰ The birth-

¹ Amos iv. 4; v. 5; vii. 13; viii. 14. Hosea viii. 5; x. 5; xii. 11.

² Amos vii. 13. ³ *Ibid.* vii. 10, 17. ⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 8.

⁵ 2 Kings xiii. 6.

⁶ Hosea ii. 13.

⁷ Hosea ii. 8: for "prepared for," read "made into." *Ewald, Hitzig. Pusey.*

⁸ Hosea iv. 13-15.

⁹ *Ibid.* ix. 15; xii. 11. Amos iv. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* iv. 11: for "heart," read "understanding."

day festival of the king saw the most revolting excesses.¹ "The drunkards of Ephraim" became a phrase even in Jerusalem.² The very "priest and the prophet" reeled with strong drink at their ministrations.³ The judge on the bench, and the military officers, covered with medals, were equally bacchanalian. Guests at feasts drank till the scene was repulsive.⁴ Even the women were given to their cups.⁵ The great ladies of Samaria—fair and well fed as the kine of Bashan—are described as greedy for drink. Such sensuality and profuseness led to all other vices. The passion for money became general. Corrupt judges, for a bribe, handed over honest men to slavery, as debtors, for so small a default⁶ as the price of a pair of shoes. The usurer, after bringing a man to poverty, seemed to grudge him the dust he had put on his head as mourning. Instead of restoring to the poor in the evening, as the law required,⁷ the upper garment they had taken in pledge,—his sleeping-robe,—men spread it, as their own, over the couch on which they lay down to nightly carousals, held in the house of their gods,—where they feasted on the flesh of their sacrifices, washed down with wine robbed from the helpless.⁸ Tumults, from such oppression, filled the streets of Samaria.⁹ The mansions of the great were stored with the plunder of their poorer neighbours. Their owners lay, garlanded

¹ Hosea vii. 5: for "him," read "themselves"; for "skins," read "heat." *Gesenius*. See margin, and the word "hamah" in the *Englishman's Heb. Concord*.

² Isaiah xxviii. 1.

³ Isaiah xxviii. 7. *Cheyne*.

⁴ Isaiah xxviii. 6, 7.

⁵ Amos iv. 1. *Hitzig*.

⁶ Amos ii. 6. *Hitzig*. *Schmoller*. Amos v. 12.

⁷ Exod. xxii. 25, 26.

⁸ Amos ii. 8. *Hitzig*.

⁹ Amos iii. 9.

and anointed, on couches of ivory. Their banquets were splendid. Rich music filled their halls as they feasted. Nor would the wine tempered with water—the drink of their fathers—content them. They drew it pure from the huge vessels in which their predecessors had mingled their modest refreshment.¹ The husbandman had to make them oppressive gifts of his wheat.² The great landowners used false measures and false weights in selling their corn, and claimed full price for even the refuse grain.³ Men had to pledge their clothes and their freedom for food.⁴

Such was the state of things even in the earlier years of Jeroboam II.; but matters grew worse towards its close, and in the years that followed his death. No truth, or mercy, or knowledge of God, we



DRINKING SCENE, KHOSABAD.

are told, was left in the land. Swearing, lying, homicide, stealing, committing adultery, housebreaking, and murder, till blood touched blood, ran riot.⁵ No road was safe. Bands of robbers infested the thoroughfares. Life was no longer sacred. Even the people at court and the priests were deeply compromised in the worst crimes.⁶

While Jeroboam lived, his strong hand may have some-

¹ Amos vi. 4-6. David is here mentioned as the inventor of musical instruments. See p. 47.

² Amos v. 11. ³ Amos viii. 5, 6. ⁴ Amos ii. 6-8; viii. 4-6.

⁵ Hosea iv. 1, 2.

⁶ Hosea v. 1, 2; vi. 9

what checked this anarchy, but at his death society was well-nigh dissolved. A few were immensely rich, but the mass of the people were in dread of slavery for the cost of an existence which had become a burden. Any revolution or disturbance that promised to change matters was sure of support. A hideous Jacquerie, or peasant wars, or risings, like those of Germany or England, might at any moment be expected. To make things still worse, the monarchy, rejecting all control by the prophets, threw off the last check to its lawlessness, and was ready to maintain itself by any violence, however extreme. Around it were seen only an army absolutely at its bidding, corrupt judges, haughty nobles, and men grown rich by unjust gains. Israel had sunk into a mere military despotism in which might was right. Revolution became chronic. Before the fall of the kingdom, no fewer than three kings reigned in a single month.¹

But the final ruin of the State was not suffered to approach, without an earnest struggle to prevent it on the part of all that was best and truest in the national life. Amidst overmastering evil there was still some good; nor were thoughtful intelligence and a measure of culture wanting, in a community which could appreciate the elevation of style and copiousness of illustration and allusion, found in the popular addresses of the prophets.

As the reign of Jehoash of Judah had been marked by the appearance of the prophet Joel,² that of Jeroboam II. was signalised by the public ministry of Amos³ and Hosea.⁴ The social position, and even the tribe of the latter are unknown, but the lowly origin of the former illustrates one of the greatest glories of Israel—that all

¹ 2 Kings xv. 10-14.

² = Jehovah is God.

³ = The porter. Klein, in *Riehm*.

⁴ = Joshua.

its sons were essentially equal in the great spiritual commonwealth of the nation; the humblest no less than the highest being chosen indifferently by God for His special service as prophets. At one season he tended flocks on the pastures of Tekoa,¹ an upland village a few miles south of Bethlehem, in Judea; in the autumn he earned a poor living by cutting the sycamore figs which grew in the valleys; a common fruit, which needed to be opened to get rid of its acrid juice, and make it edible. He was simply a labouring peasant. That he was not uncultivated, however, is shown by his literary remains, which silently witness to the efficient education of even the poorest classes in Israel in his day. But he had had no advantages of any professional training; he was neither a prophet nor a "son" of the prophets.²

He seems to have made his first public appearance after Jeroboam had crushed Moab and finished his conquests;³ while Uzziah, who came to the throne fifteen years after Jeroboam's accession, was reigning in Jerusalem.⁴ It was, further, two years before the great earthquake which happened in that king's reign.⁵ The prophetic impulse, he tells us, seized him as he was following the flock, and impelled him⁶ to go forthwith

¹ The name Tekoa comes from Taka = to strike; an allusion in this case to driving the tent-pins into the ground. The village was, hence, in all probability, only a group of tents used by the shepherds of the district.

² Amos i. 1; vii. 14, 15.

³ Amos vi. 14. 2 Kings xiv. 25.

⁴ Amos i. 1.

⁵ Bosanquet (*Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 2) fixes the date of this earthquake at B.C. 762. He proposes to lower the received chronology of the Jewish kings 25 years to make it fit into the Assyrian chronology, which is established by no fewer than five separate sources. This would make the first appearance of Amos to have taken place nineteen years before Jeroboam's death.

⁶ Amos vii. 15.

to Bethel, the religious centre of the northern kingdom. True to the associations of his simple calling, his imagery befits a peasant. Threshing instruments; the harvest cart pressed with sheaves; the lion and the bear; the bird taken in the gin; the shepherd fighting with wild beasts in defence of his flock; the shining of the constellations, as seen when watching in the fields by night; the peculiarities of the Negeb; the incidents of rural life—the sifting of corn, the basket of summer fruit, the mowing of the hayfields, the labours of the ploughman, the sower and the reaper, supply his illustrations.¹

Urged by the Spirit of God to his adventurous journey, he at once obeyed. Boldly mingling with the crowds at the national sanctuary, he denounced the corruption and crimes of the great, and foretold their certain results. Nor did he hesitate to charge Jeroboam himself with special guilt in sanctioning the religious corruption of the day. Fearless even under the shadow of the palace, he proclaimed the approaching fall of the dynasty for its unfaithfulness to Jehovah. God would rise against it with the sword. He was equally unmoved by the fear of the multitude. Israel would surely be led away captive from their own land.² Simple peasant, as he was, in his rude peasant's dress he braved king and people. Men must have recalled the bearing of Elijah and Micaiah the son of Imlah, to Ahab.³ Awed by his splendid audacity, they could not refuse him a hearing.

The addresses in which he embodied his message are wonderful as the utterances of one in such a position in life. They unite the flow and clearness of prose with the rhythm and harmony of poetry. Nor is their skill

¹ Amos i. 3; ii. 13; iii. 4, 5; iv. 2, 7, 9; v. 8, 19; vi. 12; vii 1; ix. 3, 9, 13, 14.

² Amos vii. 9-11.

³ 1 Kings xxii. 18 ff.

less marked. Coming from Judah, he disarmed the jealousy of his audience in his opening sentences, by denouncing the enemies of Israel,—Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, and arraiguing even Judah itself,¹ before he approached his complaints against Israel. He begins thus:

“Jehovah will thunder² out of Zion; He will utter His voice from Jerusalem, and the whole land will tremble. As the blood freezes in the veins with fear, so shall the grass shrivel on the pastures of the shepherds of the south, at the sound, and the trees wither on the crest of Carmel!³

“Thus saith Jehovah! Because Damascus has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They have threshed Gilead with threshing rollers with iron teeth.⁴ For this I will send fire into the house of Hazeel, and it will consume the palaces of Benhadad.⁵ I will also break through the bars of the gates of Damascus, and root out the inhabitants from the Valley of the Sun,⁶ and him that holds the sceptre⁷ from the paradise round his halls.⁸ And the people of Syria shall be led captive by the Assyrians, when Damascus is taken, to the river Kir in the far north,⁹ whence they originally came,¹⁰ saith Jehovah!

“Thus saith Jehovah! Because Gaza has three times offended,

¹ Amos i. 1-15; ii. 1-5.

² Lit. “roar,” as the warrior when he rushes to the fight. The text is amplified, to make it clear.

³ *Hitzig*. ⁴ 2 Kings x. 32; xiii. 7. Prov. xx. 26.

⁵ Hazeel lived in the palaces of Benhadad whom he had murdered. Jer. xlix. 27.

⁶ Ewald and Hitzig think the allusion here is to Baalbek—the “On” or “Sun” city.

⁷ Vassal kings from the days of Ahab. 1 Kings xx. 25.

⁸ Lit. from Beth Eden. De Wette assumes that it means a place.

⁹ On Kiepert’s *Map*, Kir is between the Black and the Caspian seas. But this identification is questioned. See Herzog, *R. E.*, 2nd ed., vol. i. p. 602. Some place it in South Mesopotamia.

¹⁰ Amos ix. 7. See 2 Kings xvi. 9.

aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They led away whole villages captive and sold them to the Edomites, their bitterest enemies, as slaves.¹ For this I will send fire on the walls of Gaza and it will consume the palaces of the city. And I will root out the inhabitants from Ashdod, and the sceptre-bearer from Askelon; and turn My hand against Ekron; and the still surviving remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord Jehovah.²

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Tyre has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They bought whole villages of captives from the Philistine forayers and sold them to Edom as slaves; though they knew the friendly relations long existing between Judah and Tyre, and that Edom and Judah were brothers. For this I will send fire on the walls of Tyre which will consume the palaces of the city!

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Edom has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. He pursued his brother with the sword, stifling all pity, and his rage tore at them continually, and he kept up his bitterness for ever.³ For this I will send fire on Teman⁴ which will consume the palaces of Bozrah.⁵

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because the sons of Ammon have thrice offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from them. They ripped up the women of Gilead who were with child, in their wars to enlarge their territory.⁶ For this I

¹ Joel iv. 1-6. Too weak for open war, the Philistines carried off whole villages in sudden forays, and took them to Gaza, whence they were sent by caravans to Petra.

² The literal fulfilment of this prophecy is seen in the very sites of most of the Philistine cities being still doubtful or unknown.

³ Joel iii. 19.

⁴ The southern part of Edom. *Hieron.*, on Amos i. 12. Also a town about 5 miles south of Petra.

⁵ A chief town of Edom—apparently the present Busseirah—"little Bozrah," in contrast to Bozrah in the Hauran)—about 30 miles slightly south-east of the lower end of the Dead Sea. Kiepert's *Map*, and *Kneucker in Schenkel*.

⁶ Arnheim, Sachs, and Zunz read—"They burst through the

will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah,¹ and it will consume the palaces of the city, amidst shouting in the day of battle; in the wild whirlwind and storm of assault.² Then shall their king go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith Jehovah!

"Thus saith Jehovah!³ Because Moab has thrice offended, aye, four times,⁴ I will not hold back my wrath from it. He burned the bones of the king of Edom to dust—to scatter them in the air or strew them on the waters, and thus rob the dead of the repose of the grave.⁵ For this I will send fire on Moab and it will consume the palaces of Kirioth,⁶ and Moab shall perish amid tumult, and the cry of battle, and the blast of trumpets. And I will destroy the ruler⁷ from its midst and slay all his princes with him, saith Jehovah."

Having won the ears of his northern audience by this denunciation of their enemies, the prophet dexterously passes to the guilt of Judah, before wounding the self-love of Israel by similar reproaches.

"Thus saith Jehovah! Because Judah has thrice offended,

mountains of Gilead." But see 2 Kings viii. 12. Hosea xiv. 1. The Ammonites seem to have renewed border wars like those of Judges xi. 4. The Assyrian was, in return, to destroy *them*.

¹ Rabbah = "The Great" city, or "the Capital." The sarcophagus (translated "bed" in our version) of Og, the gigantic king of Bashan, was preserved here. Rabbah was taken by Joab for David, but evidently did not continue long in Jewish hands, as it is here in those of the Ammonites again. See also Jer. xlix. 1. Ezek. xxv. 4, 5. The name was changed by Ptolemy II. (Philadelphus) of Egypt, to Philadelphia, on his rebuilding the city.

² Isa. xxvii. 8; xxviii. 2.

³ Joel ii.

⁴ De Wette has "many times" wherever "four" occurs.

⁵ Josh. vii. 25. Never done but to the vilest criminals. Isa. lxvi. 24.

⁶ "Kirioth" is translated in Jer. xlvi. 41, by Ewald, Graf, and Keil, "the cities." Dietrich, in Merx, *Archiv.*, vol. i. p. 320, thinks it refers here to Ar Moab, as the capital.

⁷ Lit. "Judge." They had, as vassals of Jeroboam II., no king, but only a "judge" or "shopet."

aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They have despised¹ the law of Jehovah and have not kept His statutes, and their idols, which are but lies, have led them astray—the idols after which they walked; for this I will send fire upon Judah and it will consume the palaces of Jerusalem!”

Now, at last, he comes to the guilt of Israel and the judgments it will surely bring down.

“Thus saith Jehovah!² Because Israel has thrice offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. The usurious and lawless rich sell as a slave the upright debtor, for money; the honest poor man for a debt of the value of a pair of sandals.³ They grudge⁴ the helpless even the dust they have cast on their heads in their grief, and take away the living of the wretched.⁵ Still worse; the son and the father go to the same harlot; thus profaning My Holy Name.⁶ They lay themselves down on their couches at their carousals, by every altar,⁷ on clothes given in pledge for loans, though the law requires that they be given back before sundown.⁸ They drink the wine extorted by unjust fines, in the house of their god—for their drinking feasts are held in their temples.”

¹ Zunz, *Bibel*, “rejected.”

² Amos ii. 6.

³ See *Dict. of the Bible*, art. *Sandals*. The law authorized the sale of a thief who could not repay what he stole, but it gave no power to sell a debtor unable to pay. Yet the practice of doing so gradually became common. The sons and daughters of a debtor, or his wife and children, or even the sons of a debtor who had died, were illegally sold to repay debt—in some cases, if of no higher amount than the value of a pair of sandals. See p. 120.

⁴ Lit. “pant after.”

⁵ Lit. “they drive them out of the beaten road, into one in which they cannot walk.”

⁶ Num. xx. 11; xxii. 32. Jer. xxxiv. 16.

⁷ Those of Bethel, for example; chap. iii. 14.

⁸ Exod. xxii. 25, 26.

That a people so favoured by Jehovah as Israel had been in the past should thus outrage His laws, excites the wonder of the prophet.

"If they would only remember, however—I destroyed the mighty Amorites before them. They were tall as cedars and strong as oaks; yet I destroyed them utterly, root and branch. I brought you up, also, from the land of Egypt, and led you through the wilderness for forty years,¹ that you might possess the country of the Amorite. Then, when I had given it you, I raised up prophets from among your sons, and Nazarites from among your young men, to teach you and keep you in my law. Is it not thus, ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah. But how have you received them in these days? Ye have made the Nazarites drunk with wine and have commanded the prophets not to prophesy. Ye are a heavy burden to Me, saith Jehovah. But I will make your State totter beneath you as a wagon totters when overladen with sheaves.² I shall surely visit you in wrath, and, in that day, the swift of foot shall fail to gain a place of refuge; the strong man, paralysed by fear, shall not be able to put forth his strength; the brave warrior shall not save his life; he that handles the bow shall not stand; the swift of foot shall not escape. Even the horseman shall not save his life, and the bravest among the brave will flee, throwing away his arms to deliver himself, in that day, saith Jehovah!"³

It was painful to speak thus against his brethren, for the prophet, like a true patriot, yearned over those whom

¹ Amos shows that he knew the story of the Exodus, and thus was familiar with the five "Books of Moses." See Exod. xvi. 35. Num. xiv. 33, 34; xxxii. 13. Deut. ii. 7; viii. 2; ix. 29. He knew also the law about returning at night the robe pledged through the day. But how could this have been, if the modern theory of the late origin of the Pentateuch be right?

² The Authorized Version and Hitzig render it, "I am pressed down under you," etc., but the translation I have adopted is that of Ewald, Schmoller, Zunz, De Wette, and Noyes.

³ How fearfully was this fulfilled when Samaria was taken and Israel crushed by Assyria!

he was compelled to wound and condemn. He therefore justifies his language by illustrations used in the name of Jehovah Himself. Since God has so greatly honoured Israel in the past, He has a right to their loyalty. Nor can such relations continue if this loyalty fail.

“Hear this word¹ which Jehovah has spoken against you, O children of Israel—against the whole race that I brought up from the land of Egypt! You only, says He, have I fondly known² of all the races of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities, for the very love I bear you! Two cannot walk together unless they agree.³ If Israel disobey God, He must leave them. Nor are these mere empty words. If He threaten, He will act upon His threat! The lion roars only when it sees its prey. The young lion in its den roars only when it has carried its prey thither. The snare must be set before the bird is caught, but when set is not taken up from the ground if nothing be in it. Such threats, therefore, as God has uttered through His prophet, are sent to alarm, like the peal of a war trumpet in a town, or like a city tumult permitted of Jehovah as a punishment, by the strife it raises. The prophets, God’s servants, are the appointed revealers of His will to man, and assuredly He would do nothing to Israel without disclosing it to them. This, therefore, is the warrant for their claiming respect for their message. The roar of the lion fills the soul with terror; let all then tremble before the voice of God. Nor can the prophet withhold his burden; for when the Lord God has commanded him to speak, what can he do but utter the words put in his mouth.”

Having thus vindicated his divine commission, Amos throws off all reserve and proclaims the approaching

¹ Amos iii.

² This expression is equivalent here to “chosen” and “loved.” See *De Wette. Schmoller. Hitzig.*

³ Zunz renders this, “Can two walk kindly together without having coming to an understanding?” So, in effect, most others.

judgments on Israel for its sins. The word given him from Jehovah is this—

“Cry out, O prophet, to the palaces of Ashdod, and to the palaces of the land of Egypt, and invite them, as neighbouring kingdoms, to assemble on the mountains of Samaria¹ and witness the tumults and anarchy in the midst of the city; the oppression in its bosom. It may well fill even heathen peoples with wonder. For they neither know nor care to do what is right, saith Jehovah. They heap up the fruits of violence and robbery in their palaces.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah! An enemy shall surround the land and cut off escape, and he will throw down thy boasted splendour and strength, O Samaria, and plunder thy palaces. Thus saith Jehovah! As the shepherd snatches from the jaws of the lion attacking his flock, two small bones of the leg, or a piece of an ear, so shall those sons of Israel who loll in the corners of their divans, and stretch themselves on the damask of their couches, be snatched away as captives, from amidst the slain!

“Still further, says the Lord Jehovah, the God of Hosts! Hear ye this, O Amos, and testify it to the House of Jacob. On the day when I visit the sins of Israel on him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel—the national sanctuary—and the horns of the great altar shall fall to the ground, broken off; and I will overthrow the winter houses of the rich and ungodly oppressors, and also their houses for summer; and the houses of ivory² shall be destroyed, and the great mansions will vanish, saith Jehovah.”

Nor shall the women of Samaria escape, for they are no less guilty than their lords.

“Hear this word,³ ye sleek and well fed cows of Bashan—ye haughty dames—on the hill of Samaria; who, like your husbands, oppress the poor, and tread down the helpless; who say to your lords, Bring us wine that we may drink! The Lord

¹ Spectators on the hills round Samaria could see into the city, which was on a lower hill. Amos iii. 9. See p. 40.

² See p. 46.

³ Amos iv.

Jehovah has sworn by His holiness—Behold, days come to you when you will be dragged from your fair homes by the rude soldiers who have taken the city, as fish are dragged out with the hook, and your children as with fish hooks. And ye shall go out, not by the gates, but by the breaches made by the foe in the city walls, every one by that which is nearest, and will be carried away to the mountains of Armenia.¹ So says Jehovah!

Passing now from denunciation, the prophet assails his hearers with the lighter weapons of irony.

"But you will be very religious will you, and thus avert your doom! Yet what is your religion? Go, then, to Bethel, and sin against God in doing so; to Gilgal, and add to your guilt. Bring your offerings every morning to your unholy altars; a portion of your tithes, not thrice a year at the great festivals of the law, as required, but twice a week.² Burn leavened bread as a thank offering, not unleavened, as the law demands, and publish and spread, far and wide, your liberality in free gifts to your priests

¹ *Targ. Pesh. Vulg. De Wette.* Ewald says, "Ye will cast away your images of Rimmona—the female of Rimmon—on the mountains." Others read, "to Hermon." Some "to the Harem." If Armenia be correct, Amos here gives the first hint of the Assyrian captivity. Hitzig translates the clause, "and will rush to the hills as a refuge."

² This is a difficult passage. It is translated "every three days," by most. Indeed the whole question of Jewish tithes is obscure. See Deut. xii. 5-18; xiv. 22, 29; xxvi. 12-14. From these passages it would appear: (1) that a tenth of the whole produce of the soil was assigned for the support of the Levites. (2) That out of it they were to dedicate a tenth to God, for the use of the high priest. (3) That a tithe—apparently a second tithe—was to be applied to festival purposes. (4) That every third year either this tithe or a third tithe was to be eaten in company with the poor and the Levites. But this explanation is disputed in some details; great difference of opinion prevailing as to the second and third tithes. Michaelis, *Mos. Recht*, vol. iii. § 192. *Zehnte*, in the various Lexicons. Knobel's *Komment.* Ewald's *Alterthümer*, etc., etc.

and altars; for you love to do this, O children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.

"But mark what I think of such worship, says the Lord, by the punishments I have already sent on you. I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have also withheld from you the latter rain for three months before the harvest,¹ and made it rain in one city and not on another; one place had rain, and another which had none, withered. Two or three cities had thus to go to a third, to drink water, and could not get enough. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have smitten your corn crops with rust and blight: locusts² have devoured the fruits of your gardens, vineyards, fig trees and olive trees. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have sent among you the Egyptian plague:³ I have slain your warriors with the sword, and have caused your horses, in which you trusted, to be carried off by the enemy,⁴ and I have made the stench of the slain horses and men in your camps to rise up in your nostrils. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"I have sent destruction among you like that by which I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah⁵ and ye were like a brand saved from the burning. Yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!"

¹ Rain does not fall in Palestine during half the year, but the other half, from October to March is one long rainy season, varied by intervals of beautiful weather. The early rains are those which in autumn prepare the ground for the seed. The latter rains, those of spring, continue till the crop is far advanced, refreshing and filling it out. To have no rain for three months before harvest implied a failure of the crops.

² Perhaps the terrible plague of locusts in Joel's day; possibly, another visitation.

³ Egypt was the home of the Plague.

⁴ Seemingly an allusion to the destruction of the military strength of Israel by the Syrians. 2 Kings xiii. 7.

⁵ Apparently an allusion to the awful earthquake mentioned in Zech. xiv. 5.

Since all these lighter judgments had not led to their repentance, God would proceed to severer visitations.

"Therefore I will deal with you, O Israel, as I have spoken by my servant—I will destroy your city and lead you away captive. And, since I will thus deal with you—Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, when He comes in this awful judgment on your nation! For behold! Jehovah is He who formed the mountains and created the wind, and tells man what is in his thoughts, and makes the morning-dawn and the darkness, and walks on the heights of the earth. Jehovah, the God of Hosts, is His name!"

But, now, swelling pity fills the heart of the prophet.

"Hear ye this word¹ which I utter concerning you: this lamentation, O House of Israel!

"The Virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise; she is prostrate on the ground; there is none to raise her up! For thus saith the Lord, Jehovah! The town from which a thousand men went forth shall have only a hundred left, and that from which a hundred went out shall have only ten left, to keep alive the House of Israel.

"Therefore, thus saith Jehovah to the House of Israel! Seek Me and ye shall escape these judgments and live! But seek not Bethel; go not near Gilgal; make no pilgrimages to Beer-sheba.² For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity and Bethel come to nought. Seek Jehovah and ye shall live! Seek Him, lest He burst, like fire, on the House of Joseph,³ and consume Bethel, with no one to quench it.

Ye who turn justice into wormwood and cast down uprightness to the ground, seek Him who makes the Seven Stars⁴ and Orion,⁵ and turns the night—dark as the shadow of death—into morning, and darkens day into night; that calls for the waters of the sea and pours them over the face of the earth.⁶ Jehovah is

¹ Amos v. ² The three seats of the calf worship. ³ = Israel.

⁴ Rather, Sirius, *Stern*. Heb. Kima; generally, "The Pleiades." Job ix. 9; xxxviii. 31.

⁵ Heb. Kesil = the giant. *Schrader*. In A. V. generally "fool." Isa. xiii. 10, "constellations."

⁶ Perhaps an allusion to the great earthquake wave.

His name! He causeth destruction to flash¹ forth upon the strong, and brings it down on the fortress. Ye are they who hate the unjustly accused who defends himself before you at the gate,² and abhor him who speaks for the right. Since, then, ye trample upon the poor, and extort from him bribes and gifts of wheat, ye shall not dwell in the houses of cut stone which ye have built, nor drink wine of the pleasant vineyards ye have planted! For I know your many sins; your numerous transgressions. Ye are they who oppress the just; who take bribes; who turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. The wise man, therefore, is silent in such a time, because it is evil!

“Seek good and not evil, that ye may live! In that case Jehovah, the God of Hosts, shall really be with you, as ye now falsely boast Him to be. Hate evil; love good; establish justice in the gate, and it may be that Jehovah, the God of Hosts, will have pity on the remnant of Joseph!”

But he foresees that they will not listen to his warnings and goes on to paint their doom still more fully.

“Therefore,³ because ye will not hear Me, thus, again, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts! The curse must descend; the enemy must be let loose on the land! Then, when he is so, the lament of dirge flutes and wailing women shall rise for the dead in all your streets: and in all the highways men will cry Alas! alas! and they will call in the husbandman from the field to raise the death-cry or make sad music, and the public wailing women to lament. And there shall be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through the midst of thee, in judgment.

“Yet there are some among you so blind as to wish for the day of Jehovah. Some, who think He will come on their behalf; not to punish them! Some, who mock at the long delay of that awful time! Woe to you who in blindness or mockery desire that that day were come! What will it be to you? The day of Jehovah shall be darkness and not light; evil and not prosperity.⁴ One danger shall no sooner be escaped than you will fall into another; as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him, or, having come into his house where he fancied he would be safe, should

¹ *Hitzig*.

³ Amos v. 16.

² Where trials were held.

⁴ Joel iii. 15.

lean his hand on the wall, and a serpent, hid in a chink of it, bit him. The day of Jehovah shall verily be darkness and not light; pitchy darkness without a gleam of light!

"But I know on what your confidence rests in anticipation of that awful day. On your zeal in your worship and your outward devotion. But I hate and despise your church festivals; I smell no sweet savour from the sacrifices of the great crowds at your feasts. Though you bring Me burnt sacrifices and flour offerings I will not accept them. The thank offering of your fatted calves I will not look upon. Take away from before Me the noise of your hymns, chanted round your altars; let Me not hear the music of the harps of your priests! Instead of these, let justice flow down your streets like water and righteousness like mighty streams. True religion, not outward, is the thing that can save you! Think you I lay stress on your empty ceremonies and rites? Did your fathers offer sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness through the forty years of their wanderings, O House of Israel? Yet, though they did not, I brought them into this land. Therefore, because you have done the very opposite, ye will lift up your idols in the day when you go into captivity—Siccuth, your king,—not Jehovah,—and Kewan,¹ your star god, whom you have adopted from Tyre and from the Euphrates, and I will lead you away as prisoners from this place to beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts."²

How many separate addresses are included in what now forms the "Prophecies of Amos," it is impossible to say, nor can it be known over how long a time their delivery extended. It is certain, however, that there are several, for discourses among the Jews, as among other

¹ Or Chiun—the planet Saturn. The Assyrian God Sakkut = the Terrible One, was another name for Saturn, or Moloch. *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 397. Thus, even under the dynasty of Jehu, who had so fiercely uprooted Phenician idolatry, it had once more raised its head in Israel, in the days of Jeroboam II. It is to be noticed that this passage contains the first allusion to the carrying away of Israel, but Amos does not yet name Assyria. This is done first by Hosea, in the next generation.

² *Ewald. Schrader*, art. *Sterne*, in *Bib. Lex.* See vol. ii. p. 278.

Orientals, have in all ages been marked by their pointed brevity.¹ The sixth chapter seems to mark a distinct outburst of holy indignation at some instance of wickedness in the upper classes, which had obtruded itself on the prophet, but it is levelled at the transgressors in Jerusalem and Samaria, alike.

“Woe to those² who think themselves secure under Uzziah, in Zion; to those who think themselves safe under Jeroboam in the mountain of Samaria—the great men of ‘the first of the nations,’ as you proudly call yourselves—ye, round whom the House of Israel gather, as their rulers and chiefs! Ye that care nothing for Jehovah and make little of His threatened wrath! Pass beyond the Euphrates to Calneh,³ and see how He has brought it low by the hand of the Assyrian; thence go to Hamath the Great;⁴ then go down to Gath of the Philistines, which Binnirari has so lately oppressed;⁵ are they better off now than you; is their territory greater than yours—who are no less guilty than they? Go to them, and see, you whom Jehovah has thus long spared; who will not believe that the evil day will come, and cherish oppression ever more closely; who loll on couches of ivory, and stretch on your divans, and eat the lambs of the flocks and the fatted calves from the stalls; who sing at your drunken feasts, to the murmur of the harp, and, like David, contrive for yourselves new instruments of music; who drink bowls of un-mixed wine,⁶ and anoint yourselves with the costliest perfumed

¹ Delitzsch's *Ein Tag in Capernaum*, p. 131.

² Amos vi.

³ This name does not occur in the Assyrian inscriptions. The city was apparently on the Euphrates. *Schrader*, pp. 19, 250. *Schmoller* says it is the ancient Ktesiphon in Babylonia, on the Tigris.

⁴ Hamath had been taken by Shalmaneser II., when it was a member of the Syrian league against him under Benhadad. *Obelisk*, pp. 60, 88. It was also again stormed by Sargon, in 720; two years after the fall of Samaria. *Lenormant*, vol. ii. p. 354.

⁵ *Keilinschriften*, p. 14.

⁶ *Schmoller* says “from sacred vessels.”

oils, but give yourselves no thought of the ruin of your country. None the less will He on this account visit you! Because ye act thus ye shall be led off into captivity at the head of the train of your people, and the drunken screams of the revellers will be hushed!

"The Lord Jehovah has sworn by Himself, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts! I abhor all this of which Israel is proud, and hate its palaces where such scenes are witnessed, and will give up Samaria, with all that are in it, as a prey to the spoiler. And in that day, if by a rare chance there be still ten men left by the enemy in one household, they shall die of the pestilence that will follow. And should the only friend¹ left to burn a man's corpse—for there will be no room to bury it—come to do so, and carry away the bones to render the last offices to them, and ask some one in the inmost part of the house as he does so: 'Is there any one yet alive besides thee?' he will answer, 'No.' And the visitor will say, 'Hush! it is no use to pray to Jehovah now, for He will not help,'² for behold He has ordained all this, and will smite down the great house to ruins and the cottage to pieces.'

"It is as mad to try to run horses on the rough rocks of the Negeb or to plough there with oxen³—I know these parts well—as to turn justice to gall as ye do, or fair dealing to wormwood! You glory in an empty dream when you say that Israel has won dominion under Jeroboam, by its own strength. God will raise up a nation against you that will plunder you, from Hamath in the far north to the torrent of the Arabah below the Dead Sea."⁴

The characteristics of public discourse among the Hebrews have doubtless been the same from the earliest age of the prophets, for no people have shown themselves more unchangeably conservative in their religious customs than the Jews. In the Talmud and Midraschim this is constantly illustrated; parable, proverb, and figurative presentation following each other with striking

¹ Lit. uncle or cousin.

² Amos vi. 8-11. *Eichhorn. Noyes. Hitzig. Schmoller.*

³ Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 60.

⁴ Amos vi. 12-14. *Assyria* is meant.

copiousness; the whole utterance, however, as I have noticed, being no less brief than vivid. Such a style, indeed, could not be protracted through lengthened harangues; it would overburden the hearers. Brevity was imperative to give opportunity for reflection.¹ The appeals, expostulations, and threatenings of Amos were, therefore, doubtless, delivered at different times; perhaps at different places.

That which now begins takes the new form of visions. He had gone boldly to Bethel, the headquarters of the established religion of the northern kingdom, to lift his voice before the king himself, who was there at the time, and to warn the crowds who had gathered, perhaps for their yearly religious feast, at this great centre. He tells them² that Jehovah had shown him three visions: the first, that of another visitation by locusts, which came up after the early grass had been cut and taken away for the royal horses and mules,³ when only the aftergrowth remained, on which the people depended for the fodder of their cattle. The grass of the open country had already been attacked and eaten, and that of the meadows, so essential to such a community, was about to be consumed, when Amos pleaded with God for pity. "Such a blow, O Lord," cried he, "will ruin the land, already so weak and helpless; spare it, good Lord,"—and the supplication was heard: the locusts disappeared. But now, a second vision presented itself. A terrible consuming fire glowed over the neighbouring ocean till it dried it up, and then spread to the land, on which it presently destroyed a part of that which had been saved just before from the locusts. Supplication had averted the first calamity, but when now repeated it could only limit the

¹ F. Delitzsch, *Ein Tag in Capernaum*, p. 31.

² Amos vii. 1-9.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 5.

second : a heavier destruction than before was, this time, allowed. The third vision followed : A wall appeared, over which stood Jehovah, showing with a plumb-line how far it was from being true and upright. Standing in the heart of the land, not on the borders, the wall symbolized the House of Israel ; its condition was a figure of that of the people as a whole, and its fate showed that the evil to come would not be local, but universal. Utterly worthless, it must be wholly pulled down ! The prophet no longer made any supplication on its behalf. There was, now, only judgment, without appeal. "Jehovah has said," cried Amos, "I will not forgive this people Israel, any more. The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."¹ The country would be smitten by a foreign foe and the nation carried off into captivity.

This dark prediction of steadily advancing evil had been uttered apparently under the very shadow of the temple of Bethel, before its high priest, Amaziah, and the worshipping multitude. Awed by the sacred character of the prophet and his ominous words, no interruption had hitherto been offered. Now, however, that he ventured to speak of the king and the royal family, the high priest could no longer be silent. It might compromise himself if he were so, when treason was spoken. A message to Jeroboam in the neighbouring palace informed him that Amos, who seems to have been already known to the king, since his name only is given, had conspired against him, here, in the very heart of the land, and before the assembled people. His words were so unmeasured, so fierce and disloyal, that bad results must follow. He had said that the king would die by the sword, and

¹ Amos vii. 8, 9.

Israel be carried off captive to a foreign country. Neither Jeroboam nor Amaziah dared to put the prophet to death. He might say what he chose in Judah, but must leave the northern kingdom.¹ Yet the order to leave was insolent in the extreme. "Begone," said Amaziah, in effect, "to Judah, and there eat your bread in peace, and no longer trouble yourself with what does not concern you." As if, says Hitzig, he had told him "Begone, eat your pudding, slave, and hold your peace."² "I came," answered Amos, with dignity, "not of my own accord, humble man as I am, but at the bidding of God. It is He whom you dishonour in rejecting me. He commands me to tell you that your wife shall be put to shame by the enemy when Bethel is taken; your children killed; your lands seized, and you yourself led off into captivity. Israel, also, shall surely go into captivity in a foreign land."³ Then, or while still on the borders of Israel, he delivered his last warnings. He sees a vision of a wicker basket of ripe summer fruit. It is an emblem of the approaching national ruin. The land is ready for judgment. The songs of the palace⁴ shall be turned to howlings in that day, for the dead shall be too many to bury: they will be cast out in silence and left as they lie! Woe to the oppressors of the poor in that dreadful time; the men who grudge the hindrance to money making caused by new moons and Sabbaths; who starve the people by heightening the price of corn, and by selling it with false weights! Jehovah had sworn by the excellency of Jacob, that is, by Himself, that He would never forget any of these works. A flood of Divine indignation would sweep over Israel, rising awfully and sinking again, like the waters of the Nile! In that terrible day when Jehovah

¹ Amos vii. 10-13.² Hitzig's *Amos*, p. 127.³ Amos vii. 14-17.⁴ *Ewald. Hitzig.*

visited the sins of the people, gloom would rest on the land like that of the great eclipse they had seen in the year B.C. 763.¹ Lamentations as when one mourns for an only son would fill the land. Then, at last, they would seek through the whole kingdom for a prophet to tell them how to win back the favour of God, but they would seek in vain. They had delighted in their idols and calves; they had sworn by them as dearest to their hearts,—by the Asherah in Samaria, the calf in Dan, and the festal pilgrimage to Beersheba. But it would do them no good; they would fall as a nation, and never rise again.² Another vision, announced, it may be, at a subsequent time, closes the prophet's warning.³ He sees Jehovah standing on the great altar in front of the sanctuary at Bethel, and commanding the angel of destruction to smite down the capitals of the pillars which support the temple, and bury the worshippers under its fragments. No spot in the land would be left for those who escaped this catastrophe. If they hid in Sheol, or climbed, for safety, to heaven, they would be dragged thence; the top of Carmel would not shelter them; no, nor the depths of the sea.⁴ Even to be led off captive would be no security; they would be destroyed by the sword! Jehovah has power to do this! They had seen in the great earthquake, how when He touches the land it melts before Him and fills all with terror; how He makes it rise and sink in waves like the rising and sinking of the Nile! It is He who builds His palace in the heavens and rests the vault of the firmament on the earth; who raises the sea into waves, as they

¹ There were total eclipses in the years B.C. 803 and 784. *Hitzig*, p. 130. Also on the 15th June, 763. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vi. p. 12. See Amos viii. 9, 10.

² Amos viii. 9–14.

³ *Ibid.* ix. 1 ff.

⁴ For the water serpent, see Isaiah xxvii. 1. Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14.

had seen on the awful day of the earthquake, and hurls it on the land! Israel is no longer the people of God; it is no more to Him than the Ethiopians, or the Philistines, or the Syrians. Its sins have turned Him from it; He has utterly cast it off.

Yet He will still retain a people for Himself! If there be any faithful to Him in Israel He will sift them out from the chaff and save them.¹ The kingdom of Judah, moreover, shall be upheld; the broken walls of the now fallen House of David will be repaired and strengthened and it will be raised to its ancient glory. Edom and all the nations shall once more be theirs.² Prosperity will return. There will be so much land to plough after the winter crops, that the summer harvest, then earlier than in the past, will be ripe before the ploughman has finished, and the vintage will be so great that it will not be wholly gathered before the late sowing has begun; the mountains will drop sweet wine, and streams of it will seem to melt the hills.³

Though from Judah, Amos has no thought but of brotherly love to Israel. Her captivity will return in those happy days and be reunited to Judah; and all the tribes, once more a great whole, shall dwell, thenceforward, in rich prosperity, in the happy and fruitful land!

¹ Amos ix. 9, 10.

² *Ibid.* ix. 11, 12.

³ Furrer's *Palästina*, p. 92. It is to be noticed that verse 13 is virtually a quotation of the 5th verse of the 26th chapter of Leviticus. So much for the late origin of that book! If Amos knew it, when was it written? Hitzig attempts to solve the difficulty by supposing Leviticus to have been compiled in Jehoshaphat's day (2 Chron. xvii. 7), but this will hardly suit the new school, who suppose it an invention of the priests during the Exile.* But even Hitzig is arbitrary in his older date. It is a mere conjecture. Surely modesty befits the new critics who so confidently dogmatize and so widely differ.

* Stade, *Gesch. des V. Israel*, n. 62.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

ASSUR-NIZAR, B.C. 753-746; TIGLATH-PILESER II. (PUL), 745-728;
SHALMANESER IV., 727-723; SARGON, 722-706.

MORE than two hundred years had passed since the death of David, when Amaziah of Judah, the eleventh in descent from him, fell a victim to unpopularity. His grandfather Ahaziah had been murdered by Jehu; his father, Jehoash, by a palace conspiracy. The lawlessness of the northern kingdom had tainted the southern; a king's life was no longer safe. Yet the general loyalty to the reigning dynasty remained undisturbed. No rival to the legitimate heirs thought of offering himself. The shadow of the great name of David still surrounded its inheritors with a measure of sacredness. The earlier part of Amaziah's reign had been glorious, but his elation had led to his ruin. Rashly insisting on attacking the proud House of Jehu, he had seen Jerusalem taken and in part dismantled; its treasures carried off; the sons of its chief men taken to Samaria as hostages; and he, himself, after having been a prisoner, had been indebted for his throne to the moderation of his opponent. The broken down bastions of the city, and the enforced absence of the hostages from their families, had kept the disgrace

rankling in the bosoms of the citizens, till, at last, fifteen years after his humiliation, he was murdered at Lachish, whence his body was afterwards brought to Jerusalem for burial.¹

He was succeeded by his son Azariah, or Uzziah, a lad of sixteen. Joash, his father's conqueror, was still reigning in Samaria, nor was he succeeded by his son Jeroboam II., who was 31 years of age at Uzziah's accession, till the fifteenth year of that great king. Uzziah's father, in spite of his defeat, had raised the kingdom in some degree from its long depression, by his victory over Edom; his son was destined to restore it to greater glory than it had enjoyed since the death of Solomon. The good results of supreme power, in the hand of an able and upright ruler, have seldom been more strikingly shown. He roused the fainting spirit of the nation, and kindled its old vigour and stormy energy to the noblest achievements. Nor was he less great in peace than in war and politics. The prosperity of the country kept pace with the respect it won among the nations.² Edom, which his father had subdued, was once more independent, but Uzziah early in his reign reconquered it, and re-established the long intermitted sea trade with India, from Elath, a port on the Red Sea,³ near Ezion-geber.

For the first time, also, since David, Judah was strong enough to attack and overcome the Philistines. Their principal cities, Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod were taken, and dismantled; and new towns founded in their districts.⁴ The southern Arab tribes in Philistine pay, who had overwhelmed King Jehoram,⁵ were likewise crushed, and

¹ 2 Kings xiv. 19, 20. 2 Chron. xxv. 27, 28.

² 2 Kings xiv. 21, 22; xv. 1 f. 2 Chron. xxvi. 1 f.

³ 1 Kings ix. 26. 2 Chron. viii. 17.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxvi. 6.

⁵ 2 Chron. xxi. 16.

Uzziah's name spread abroad as far as the frontier of Egypt.¹ As confusion and disaster increased in the northern kingdom, moreover, large portions of the old territory of Israel east of the Jordan fell into his hands. Ammon, Moab, and the districts connected with them, gladly put themselves under his protection and paid him tribute.² Nor did he fall into the error of rash security. The hostages taken from his father having been restored, he repaired and strengthened the walls of Jerusalem, erecting towers at the angles, and arming them with the most improved "artillery" of the day, such as catapults, shooting huge arrows and hurling weighty stones at an approaching enemy.³ His army, moreover, was re-organized, and thoroughly equipped with shields, spears, helmets, and cuirasses; the lighter troops having bows and slings.⁴ The whole fighting manhood of the kingdom was entered on muster-rolls, so as to be available to any extent; the aggregate rising to no fewer than 307,500, with a select corps of Gibborim numbering 2,600 men.⁵ It had almost caused a rebellion when David inaugurated a military census of the kingdom, but under Uzziah such a measure had come to be a matter of course.⁶

He was no less active in other directions. Devoted to everything connected with the country, he built towers in the outlying districts, for the protection of his numerous flocks and herds, and caused wells to be dug wherever required, for their wants. The slopes of the Shephelah and the upland pastures of the Negeb, once more, as in David's time, pastured the royal cattle and sheep, under the king's herdsmen and shepherds. The crown lands in the valleys were carefully tilled, and the districts suited

¹ 2 Chron. xxvi. 8.

² Isa. xvi. 1.

³ 2 Chron. xxvi. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.* ver. 14.

⁵ *Ibid.* ver. 12, 13.

⁶ *Ibid.* ver. 11.

for the grape planted with vineyards.¹ Wide prosperity, as Joel foretold, was following the religious reformation he had inaugurated.

Yet Uzziah's highest distinction was his loyalty to the old religion, to which he adhered with a sincerity and enthusiasm that reacted powerfully on the nation. The prophets were once more in favour. One especially is named. "Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God,"² seems to have been the royal tutor and counsellor. The altered spirit of the times showed itself in the rise of such men as Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. A vigorous religious sentiment had spread since Joel's time, and, among others, animated the king. The Spirit was indeed being poured out on the nation. Hosea, who rose in Israel in the end of Jeroboam's reign, amidst the deepening corruption of the northern kingdom, looked, with a tender yearning, to Judah, as the one hope of his race for its spiritual future.³ But, unhappily, the evil which had spread so widely in the north was slowly gaining ground in Judah also, as the watchful eyes of the prophets noticed, with ever increasing sadness.

For a while, however, Joel's great religious revival held its ground, yielding only slowly to the injurious influences around. A number of Psalms attributed to this time show how vigorously the higher principles of the past were cherished, at least by a noble few. Ewald assigns the 6th, 12th, 13th, 23rd, 27th, 30th, 39th and 62nd to this period, but as their superscriptions represent them as written by David, we must hesitate to accept this later date for them. Pious souls, however, in an

¹ Carmel, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10=garden land. The hill-chain of Carmel was in the hands of Israel.

² 2 Chron. xxvi. 5.

³ Hosea i. 7.

age which saw the birth of Isaiah, would often recur to these holy songs, so fitted to express their lofty aspirations and tenderest emotions, no less than their humility and godly awe. The temple services and private gatherings would echo such strains as those of the 12th Psalm.

"Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceaseth;
The faithful fail from among the children of men.
They speak falsehood one with another;
With flattering lips and a double heart do they speak.
Destroy, O Jehovah! the flattering lips,
The tongue that speaks proud things;
Which says 'With our tongues will we prevail,
Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?'"¹

The pure and lofty words of the 62nd Psalm would find a response in all faithful bosoms;

"Truly my soul waiteth upon God;
From Him cometh my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation;
He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.
How long will ye storm against a man?
How long will ye rush at him, all of you,
As at a shaking wall or a tottering fence?²
My soul, wait thou only upon God!
My expectation is from Him!

Trust in Him at all times!
Ye people pour out your heart before Him!
God is a refuge for us.

¹ Ps. xii. 1-11.

² The word is *jedar*, and means a wall of rough, shapeless stones of all sizes, built without mortar. *Jedars* are still the ordinary fences for gardens, vineyards, etc., and vary in height from four to six feet. After the storms of winter they always need repair; the rains washing away the earth from beneath them and leaving them frail and "tottering." Neil's *Palestine*, p. 52. Such dry walls are common in Britain.

The sons of men are but a breath ;
 Mortals are at best a lie,
 Laid in the balance, the whole are like a breath.
 Put no trust in fraud ;
 Be not blinded by unjust gain ;
 If wealth increase, think little of it.
 One word has God spoken ;
 Two are there I have heard ;
 That power rests with God,
 And that mercy also, O God, is with Thee ;
 For Thou renderest to every man according to his work."¹

Joel's words were bearing fruit. Not a few had "torn their hearts and not their garments,"² in earnest hope that the nation would be persuaded to do the same ; that God might dwell in the midst of them and keep them from ever being ashamed.³ Judah had already triumphed over the heathen round, as the prophet had promised. Only true godliness was needed in the people at large to secure such a vigorous spiritual life as would make them in the highest sense a kingdom of priests. Nor was religious enthusiasm ever more imperatively required. Trouble lowered over the North which might speedily break on Judah also and crush it. As at other periods of history, it seemed, moreover, as if nature herself were passing through a crisis. The ever memorable locust swarms of Joel's day more than once partially returned ;⁴ drought, and famine, and the plague, threatened the land, if they had not already invaded it,⁵ and now, as Uzziah's reign was closing, came a physical convulsion so terrible that for generations it was known as The Earthquake,⁶ and furnished a date from which events

¹ Ps. lxii. 1-5, 8-12. ² Joel ii. 13. ³ Joel iii. 17 ; ii. 27.

⁴ See Amos vii. 1.

⁵ Amos iv. 6-10.

⁶ Amos i. 1. Palestine has been repeatedly visited by severe earthquakes. Josephus mentions one that happened in the year

were reckoned. The imagery of the prophets of the age reflects the deep impression it left. Towns and villages were overthrown like the doomed cities of the plain; thick darkness obscured the sun at midday; the ocean burst over the land, like the Nile over Egypt;

B.C. 30. Judea was covered with ruins, and about 10,000 men perished by the fall of houses. *Ant.*, XV. v. 2. In A.D. 1151, the Hauran was in the same way laid waste by a physical convulsion. In 1837, a terrible earthquake laid Tiberias and Safed in ruins. The line of disturbance extended, in the direction of the fissure of the Jordan valley, for nearly 500 miles, with a lateral breadth of 90 to 100 miles. The shock was felt at Beirut and even in Cyprus. The heat of the thermal springs at Tiberias rose too high to be registered by ordinary thermometers, though whether the water actually boiled is not told. The earth opened and shut in great clefts, swallowing up many persons alive (see Num. xvi. 32). Seven hundred perished in Tiberias alone. So frequent, indeed, are earthquakes in Palestine, that the houses in Lebanon and Anti-lebanon are built, as a rule, only one storey high, with flat roofs, on account of them, and large buildings in many cases show signs of the sinking or elevation of parts of their walls. Sodom and Gomorrah appear to have perished by an earthquake. Prof. Fraas, in *Riehm*. Furrer, in *Schenkel*. Ruetschi, in *Herzog*, art. *Erdbeben*.

Allusions to the phenomena of earthquakes are not infrequent in the poetical books of Scripture. In Psalm civ. we read,

“At Thy rebuke the mountains flee;
At the voice of Thy thunder they tremble away;
—Mountains rise and valleys sink—
To the place which Thou hadst founded for them.”

Ver. 7, 8 (*Ewald*).

In Ps. xviii. 7, we read—

“The earth shook and trembled
The foundations also of the hills* moved and were shaken.”

See also 1 Kings xix. 11. Isa. liv. 10. Matt. xxiv. 7; xxvii. 51. On this subject, Dr. Pusey writes very fully in his *Minor Prophets*, p. 189.

* *Ewald*, Heavens.

the land trembled and rose and fell as if in waves;¹ the mountains seemed to melt and the valleys to be cleft, as wax before fire:² men fled hither and thither, in blind dismay from before the reeling hills and the yawning plains.³ An incident which darkened the last years of Uzziah is connected by Josephus with this awful event, though the historical books make no allusion to any relation between them. David and Solomon had discharged priestly duties without any remonstrance; but the reformation under Jehoiada, and the long pupilage of Jehoash, had consolidated the power of the priests, and enabled them to claim an exclusive right to perform the sacred offices. Uzziah, however, we are told, did not acknowledge this recent innovation, and having put on priestly robes on a day of high festival, entered the Holy Place to offer incense on the golden altar. For the first time, however, in the history of the monarchy, the royal assumption of such duties was resented as a sacrilege. The high priest Azariah,⁴ with eighty of his colleagues, met the king and required him to desist. But Uzziah, says Josephus, was indignant, and threatened to put them to death, if they were not silent. Forthwith, he adds, a great earthquake shook the ground, rending the very temple, so that the sun shone through the opened roof, full on the face of the king, and as it did so a spot of leprosy showed itself on his brow. Thus rendered unclean, he was forthwith seized and driven out of the sacred limits.⁵ It is at least certain that he became a leper shortly before his death, and henceforth lived in a house apart, leaving the management of affairs in the hands of Jotham, his son. His very grave was dug in the field near the royal tombs, that they might not be

¹ Amos iv. 11, 13; v. 8, 18; ix. 5.² Micah i. 4.³ Zech. xiv. 4-6.⁴ 2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 20.⁵ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 4

defiled by holding a leprous corpse.¹ It is a striking illustration of the awfulness of the earthquake thus associated with the punishment of one of the best of Jewish kings, that in the days of Josephus, half the Mount of Olivet was believed to have been torn off by it and rolled in hideous confusion over a space of four furlongs, blocking up the ancient roads and overwhelming the royal gardens.²

The signal growth of priestly claims and authority, shown in the prohibition of Uzziah from exercising the sacred functions as his predecessors had done, marked a turning point in the religious history of the nation. From this time the king and hierarchy stood in more or less antagonistic relations to each other. The sacred order came into greater prominence than ever before, and for the first time monopolized the performance of the public ministrations of religion.³ The temple ceremonial was henceforth greatly developed and zealously maintained. Feast days, new moons, Sabbaths and solemn assemblies,⁴ were rigidly observed. The sacrifices of rams and bullocks, lambs and he goats, were regulated by strict rules. The ritual of worship was finally established in elaborate completeness on the basis of the ancient arrangements of David and Solomon, and under the exclusive care of a watchful and jealous hierarchy. But this enthusiasm for forms, however earnest and sincere under Jehoiada, in the first reaction against the neglect, and, it may be, abuses of half heathen times, passed before long, as all ritual is apt to do, into a merely mechanical service. Fanaticism on the one hand and hollow insincerity on the other turned the priesthood into the worst foes of healthy spiritual life.

¹ 2 Chron. xxvi. 21, 23. *Heb.*

² *Ant.*, IX. x. 4.

³ Joel i. 9, 13; ii. 17.

⁴ Hos. ii. 11. Isa. i. 13, 14.

This striking development of high sacerdotalism found its antidote in the rise of the new class of prophets, of which Joel and Amos were among the first representatives. Elijah had been the last, as he was the greatest, of the prophets of the past. Elisha had in many ways differed from him, and Gehazi proved immeasurably beneath his master. The order had been characterized till Elijah's time by isolation from the community, and by a sternness which made even kings tremble; by its mission to individuals rather than to the nation; by its ascetic habits, its strange garb, and the high-wrought excitement of its appearances, in which music played a prominent part. But things had gradually changed. Already in Ahab's day, it had become largely degenerate,¹ though the great truths enforced by its nobler members had penetrated the conscience of the nation, however much they might be neglected. Elisha had overthrown the House of Omri by active interposition, but the results of Jehu's elevation had not corresponded with the just expectations from it. His dynasty had soon fallen into the errors of its predecessors and proved a failure. The spirit of the times, also, was different. Violent political interference was no longer possible or desirable, on the part of the prophets. Their force in this direction had spent itself in the revolution of Jehu, and they could not return to it under the kings who succeeded him. In Judah, also, they had become more calm and measured. A spirit of disbelief in their claims had spread widely; in part through the increase of pretenders to inspiration. The younger school of prophets, foreshadowed by Micaiah in the days of Ahab, rose, in the person of Joel, first in Judah, then in the northern kingdom. No longer claiming political power, or raising

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 12.

and dethroning rulers, they appealed directly to the conscience of king and people. Laying aside the harshness of the past, they retained their nobler influences. They became freer and less involved in outward combinations. Eternal truths gained more prominence, and were urged more directly and distinctly. Gathering strength and confidence with years, they worked more beneficially, and with more permanent results. But their advancement to this high moral power was only gradual. Regenerated, and, as it were, spiritually new-born, the order was opposed by the mass of the people, who were unwilling to be disturbed in their moral security. Mocking the roughness of the old prophets, they repudiated the demands of the new. These had, moreover, to contend with multitudes of pretenders, who flattered the great, and claimed supernatural power through unholy acts. But the true prophets remained faithful to their calling, and, as years passed, showed themselves the noblest creation of Jewish history. Striving to introduce a new era, of faith working by love, they became the crown and glory of the spiritual life of Israel. Nor did outward discouragements daunt them. As the prosperity of the kingdom faded away they strove, ever more grandly, to save it by the righteousness they preached, and to encourage hope even amidst despair, by anticipations of a glorious Messianic era hereafter.

The reign of Jehoshaphat¹ had already seen this new order—the Younger School of Prophets—in the appearance of Joel, the first of his illustrious brotherhood whose writings have come down to us. Though he still retained, in a measure, thoughts of war and vengeance, the keynote of all who followed him had been given in

¹ Credner, Movers, Hitzig, Ewald, Meier, Keil and Davidson assign Joel to the reign of Jehoshaphat.

his demand that the people "should rend their hearts and not their garments," and in his announcement of the necessity of an outpouring of the Spirit of God as a precursor of national blessing. Amos had risen in the generation after, as his successor in the great work of spiritual reformation, repeating often his very words and thoughts,¹ and denouncing as vigorously the merely ceremonial and outward. In Judah, Zechariah, the companion and counsellor of Uzziah, continued the sacred apostolate, advancing in clearness of spiritual vision; if indeed he be the prophet whose writings are now in the Canon; no longer picturing the Messiah as a warlike monarch, but as the Prince of Peace, riding on a lowly ass, just, and bringing salvation even to the heathen.²

In the northern kingdom the succession was maintained by the prophet Hosea, whose very tribe and birth-place are unknown. Rising apparently towards the close of the reign of Jeroboam II., his activity continued till the fifth year of Hezekiah, a period of fifty-nine years; during which those of his utterances which still survive, were delivered, at unknown intervals. The events of that long period are the best commentary on their burden.

While Jeroboam II. lived, things continued in a measure settled, but with his death, in a grey old age, the dissolution of the State became imminent. His son, Zachariah, the last prince of his House, ascended the throne in the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah, but had reigned

¹ Amos i. 2, compared with Joel iii. 16 and i. 10.

„ i. 6-10, 11. „ „ iii. 19; iii. 6.

„ iv. 9. „ „ ii. 3 ff.

² Zech. ix. 9. Some think there were two prophets of the name. The balance of proof, however, seems against this, and the writings known as those of Zechariah will consequently be noticed hereafter.

only six months¹ when he perished by a conspiracy headed by one Shallum;² in connection, perhaps, with a confederate whose name only, Kobolam, survives.³ The prophecy that Jehu's House should reign till the fourth generation, and then violently end, was thus literally fulfilled.⁴

Shallum himself held the throne only a month, when he, too, was dethroned and killed by Menahem, another military adventurer, who was able to retain power for ten years and to bequeath it to his son, Pekahiah. But before Menahem reached the object of his ambition, "three shepherds had been smitten"⁵ within a single month. So completely had lawless violence gained the upper hand in Israel.

That the new usurper should have reigned so long as he did is explained in part by the Assyrian inscriptions. Since the days when Shalmaneser II. had attacked Hazael of Syria, Israel and Judah had been free from Assyrian inroads, except that Binnirari, before he returned to Nineveh, had marched as a conqueror into Palestine as far as the limits of the tribe of Manasseh.⁶

The second king after that monarch—Assurdanili, who began his reign ten years after Binnirari's death—was the next invader of the west.⁷ Damascus was once more attacked, and Hadrach, a district of Syria, overrun.⁸ A

¹ 2 Kings xv. 8.

² 2 Kings xv. 10.

³ In 2 Kings xv. 10. The words "before the people" are in the *Sept.* "Keblaam," as if the name of a second conspirator. Ewald supposes the expression refers to a fellow-conspirator or rival of Shallum, of whom we know nothing further.

⁴ 2 Kings x. 30. Amos vii. 9.

⁵ Zech. xi. 8.

⁶ Smith's *Assyria*, p. 69.

⁷ So Smith, p. 71. Schrader makes Shalmaneser III. (B.C. 783-773) invade Lebanon to cut down cedars, and also attack Damascus. *Keilinschriften*, p. 314.

⁸ Zech. ix. 1.

few years later, however, the great city of Assur revolted, and Assurdanili's power of troubling Western Asia was checked. Nor did Assyria begin to extricate itself from these internal troubles till the year B.C. 745, when Pul, or Tiglath-pileser II.,¹ who was not of the royal family, seized the throne of Nineveh.²

Menahem's success in retaining his power so long, rose, in part, from the weakness of Syria through the repeated attacks of the Great King; in part, from the temporary weakness of Assyria itself; in part, from his judicious submission to Tiglath-pileser, when summoned to do so; but doubtless in some measure, also, from his able and energetic rule, which was hampered by no scruples of pity or weakness. His throne, in fact, rested largely on terror, for he waded through blood to reach it. The people of Tiphseh or Tappuah, not far from Tirzah,³ and those of other towns, were ruthlessly butchered for adhering to Shallum and not opening their gates at once to his murderer. Nor did he shrink from cruelties which had seemed to the Syrian Hazael too shocking to be inflicted even on enemies, when Elisha foretold that he

¹ Pul is from Pil, in Pileser. *Schrader*, p. 127

² From a series of Babylonian dated tablets, in the British Museum, collated with the Canon of Ptolemy, an astronomer of the middle of the second century after Christ, it is found that from B.C. 763 to 745, when Pul seized the throne, a succession of revolts had shaken the empire. Hence the army had to be retained at home, and foreign campaigns were undertaken only when thought unavoidable—not, as hitherto—from choice. Six great rebellions are mentioned: an outbreak of the plague is noted, and for six years the army is said to have been kept “in the land”—that is in Assyria. In the eighteen years before the accession of Pul there were only five military expeditions, all, apparently, on a small scale. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vi. pp. 12, 13.

³ Kneucker, in *Bib.-Lex.* Thenius reads Tappuah—a town in Ephraim.

would commit them. Raised by a ferocious soldiery to the crown, Menahem had the iron hand needed to keep them down, when once he was master. His kingdom extended beyond the Jordan, for he still retained Jeroboam's conquests, in part, though the districts on the south which had sought protection under Uzziah were left undisturbed.

Tiglath-pileser II., the Pul of the Bible, proved one of the most warlike of the later Assyrian kings. His annals show that he accompanied his armies in person to the wild mountains of Georgia and the Caspian Sea on the north; to the banks of the Indus on the east; and to the frontiers of Egypt, and the wastes of the Sinai Peninsula on the west and south. The annals of this fierce conqueror's reign, inscribed in his lifetime on a long series of alabaster tablets which lined the inner walls of his palace at Calah, a district of Nineveh, have unfortunately in great measure perished. The splendid building which contained them was dismantled in the next century by Esarhaddon, and the historical slabs carried off for a new palace, and set up in it, after the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser II. had been effaced. Hence only fragments of some, mutilated and left behind in the removal, have been found, giving a few broken glimpses of the Great King's rule. From these and from ancient authors, however, we find that Tiglath-pileser, after seizing the throne, to which he had apparently no legitimate title, and securing peace round Nineveh, set out in his first year, 745, against Babylon and Chaldæa at the mouths of the Euphrates;—the one, hated as the ancient rival of his capital, the other, as the refuge of Assyrian patriots or rebels. Ever victorious, he left a titular king at Babylon, and caught and crucified the prince of Chaldæa,¹ ending the campaign by causing himself to be

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 128.

proclaimed "king of the Sumirs and of Akkad" in Babylon itself. The year 744 also was spent in the east,¹ but in 743 he marched against Arpad² in Syria and received tribute from Tyre, Byblos, the island of Rhodes³ and Hamath. His tactics were those of his predecessors; to stamp out revolt by savage ferocity. He boasts of the multitudes killed in battle, or impaled when taken; of the pyramids of bodies he raised at the gates of cities he was besieging; of the desolation he made where these cities once stood, and of the throngs of prisoners of all ages and both sexes, whom he led into captivity and slavery, with all their possessions and their dishonoured gods.⁴ A grand durbar to receive the homage of the tributary kings, far and near, having been held at Arpad,⁵ he returned to the Euphrates, carrying off as many of the still surviving population as he had been able to seize.

From 742 to 740 there are no annals, but in 739 he again appeared in Syria, to break up a confederation which the "Hittite kings," under the inspiration of the powerful Uzziah of Judah, had formed to resist him. Hamath now felt the weight of his arm. Its people were swept off to Assyria and its power broken. The terror of these victories spread on every hand and secured the trembling submission of many local rulers. Another great durbar, to receive their homage and tribute, was held, we do not know where, in the following year, 738. A list still remains of seventeen of the royal personages, who appeared, either in person or by deputy; doubtless with lavish pomp and display.

Among these we find Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, the kings of Byblos on the coast, of Carchemish on

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 140.

² Tel Erfad, north of Aleppo.

³ This name is doubtful.

⁴ *Menant*, pp. 137-148.

⁵ *Keilinschriften*, p. 141.

the Euphrates; the princes of Armenia; a queen from Arabia, and Menahem of Samaria. With a kingdom in anarchy, the latter could not resist Tiglath-pileser, and prudently submitted to the payment of 1,000 talents of silver, equal to £375,000¹ of our money, but worth in purchasing value perhaps twenty times as much. So enormous a sum was beyond the power of Menahem to defray from his ordinary revenues, but the rich men of his kingdom were made to feel the first pinch on their ill-gotten wealth² by having to contribute a forced loan to the king of fifty shekels of silver³ each. Yet this expenditure, though great, was well repaid by Tiglath, in return for it, confirming Menahem in his kingdom; an engagement which secured the active support of Assyria if he were attacked.

Uzziah does not appear on the list of tributaries. Vigorous and powerful, he doubtless reckoned on the support of the countries dependent on himself, and therefore omitted in the records of Assyrian feudatories of the day—the Philistines, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and others.⁴ Egypt, moreover, was always in the background, as a possible ally of any nation of Palestine against the Great King; promising them help if attacked, and in many cases instigating their rebellion, in the hopes of keeping Assyria at a distance from the Nile, which it eagerly coveted. Palestine, indeed, was to the Pharaohs, in respect

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 199.

² There were 3,000 shekels of silver in a talent, so that the payment of 1,000 talents by contributions of 50 shekels would require 60,000 contributors. This shows the number of rich men in the northern kingdom to have been still large. The shekel was apparently equal to 2s. 6d., so that each had to give, nominally, £6 5s.; equal in reality to, perhaps, over £120 of our money.

³ 2 Kings xv. 20.

⁴ *Keilinschriften*, p. 143.

to the invader from the Euphrates, what Afghanistan is to us in relation to Russian advances in the East.

Not caring to attack Judah under such a king as Uzziah, with, perhaps, the aid of Egypt if needed, Tiglath-pileser returned to Nineveh without attempting more than the destruction of the league with Hamath.

From 737 to 735 the affairs of Armenia and Chaldæa again occupied him, but in 734 he returned to Palestine, where Menahem had died, leaving his crown to his son Pekahiah. The lawlessness of the past, however, broke out afresh in Israel, as soon as the hand of a vigorous ruler like Menahem was removed. The army had raised him to the throne, and asserted its power only too successfully against his successor. Two years had hardly passed when a conspiracy to effect a revolution was formed by Pekah, the officer in command of the king's body guard. Supported by his troop, consisting apparently of about four hundred men,¹ including many from Gilead, his own district, Pekah, aided by fifty of them, succeeded in murdering the king while in his harem. Uzziah was still nominally reigning in Judah, but had associated Jotham, his son, with him in the government, from the time of his attack of leprosy. His death, however, in the second year of Pekah's reign, left Jotham the contemporary of that ruler for his succeeding years.

Able and energetic, Pekah was perhaps the only man in the kingdom able to ward off its fall for a time. He had seized the crown while Pul, that is, Tiglath-pileser, was engaged in Armenia and Chaldæa in the years 737 to 735, and soon showed signs of resistance to Assyria. When, therefore, Pul invaded Philistia in 734, to punish its alliance with Uzziah in 739 and its refusal to pay tribute, Israel had to suffer some of his displeasure.

¹ *Sept.*

Pekah had joined Rezin in an attempt to induce Jotham of Judah to join a new league against him, and on his refusal, they had revenged themselves by raids into his territory, to force him into their alliance.¹ On his death, the weak Ahaz, his son, continued his neutrality and was subjected to still greater affronts. A combined army of Syrians and Israelites invaded Judah and invested Jerusalem, for Pekah did not shrink even from an unpatriotic alliance with the hereditary foe of his race, to support his throne and crush his brethren of the southern kingdom.² Under these circumstances, Ahaz hastened to seek the help of the Great King, by becoming his tributary;³ a step which forced Pekah to do the same, so as to save himself, if possible, for the time, from invasion.⁴

Marching first to the west of Lebanon, Pul in his new campaign crushed all opposition in that quarter. A second corps had, meanwhile, invaded Gilead;⁵ the main army pushing on, steadily, to the south. "Hanno of Gaza," says the Great King, "fled before my troops, and escaped to Egypt. I took Gaza and carried off its spoil and its gods, and erected my royal image in it." The same is also recorded of other places, whose names are lost. From Philistia he marched into the wild Sinai Peninsula and Arabia, and forced a new queen who was

¹ 2 Kings xv. 37.

² The dates given in the Assyrian inscriptions, and corroborated by the Canon of Ptolemy, seem to show that the received chronology of the Kings and Chronicles for this period needs a searching revision. The length of the reigns both in Israel and Judah appear to involve corruptions of the text. Hitherto, indeed, all attempts to reconcile the figures given with the records of Assyria have been more or less doubtful.

³ *Keilinschriften*, p. 147.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-152.

⁵ This is a doubtful word in the inscriptions.

reigning there, to acknowledge his power.¹ Pekah had to suffer the loss of some towns and a large deportation of his people, though he saved his kingdom for a time by lowly abasement before the conqueror. His chief men, of the anti-Assyrian party, were carried off as slaves to the Euphrates, with all their wealth.² The words of Amos had already come true. The haughty oppressors of their poorer countrymen were stripped and humbled.

The territory on the east of the Jordan had now for the first time gained the foremost place in the kingdom, for Pekah was born in Gilead, and his supporters in the royal guard, in seizing the throne, were men of his clan. The names of two of them, indeed, which survive, carry us back to the transjordanic history of the times of Joshua and David; Argob, perhaps the chief of the wild lava district of the same name, in Western Manasseh, and Arieḥ, the lion-like, reminding us of the Gadite chiefs, "with faces like the faces of lions," who swam the Jordan when it was in flood, to join the son of Jesse. But while the boast of having given a king to the tribes ran through all the glens and valleys of Reuben, Gad, and Eastern Manasseh, the hour had struck for the punishment of their sins. The land was full of "evil-doers; polluted with blood."⁴ The curse of God had been denounced by His prophet on its idolatry and degeneracy and was now permitted to descend. Nor was it alone in its calamities. The hills of Upper Galilee as well as the glades of Gilead echoed the tread of the Assyrian battalions. The town of Ijon, in Naphtali,⁵ twenty miles north of Lake Merom; of Janoah, also in the mountains of that tribe; of Kedesh, five miles west of Lake Merom; of Hazer, close by Kedesh, were taken,

¹ *Keilinschriften*, p. 146.

² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴ Hosea vi. 1; vi. 8; xii. 11.

⁵ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. xiii. 1. See p. 33.

among others, and as many of their inhabitants as had not succeeded in fleeing from the enemy, were led off in long trains, to captivity, in Assyria. The whole of Upper Galilee, indeed, was swept as by a net. The smoke of burning villages darkened the air. The mountain caves were filled with pale multitudes who had hidden in them for their lives, till the flood of invasion rolled past. Across the Jordan, the rich meadows and wooded hills of Gilead saw the population hurrying, amidst loud wails, from the advancing foe; leaving behind all their wealth, as his prey. Yet vast numbers were taken, and added to the dismal columns of prisoners, to be marched to the Euphrates. Nearly half of the wide territory of Israel was finally torn from it. Other races than the chosen people were soon brought to repeople the solitudes. "The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea—the district towards the Mediterranean,—Galilee of the heathen, and the country beyond Jordan saw grievous affliction."¹ Samaria itself was forced to pay a tribute of ten talents of gold, 1,000 talents of silver, and other penalties not now legible on the annals. "All this," says Pul, "I carried off to Assyria. The districts belonging to Gilead, Abel (Beth Maachah), and others," he adds, "on the east of the land of the House of Omri—far off and broad, I joined, in their whole extent, to Assyria, and set my prefects over them."²

Damascus, now stripped of its allies and left isolated, was next attacked, but resisted bravely, succumbing only after a tedious siege during the years 733 and 732.³ But its fall, at last, was terrible. "I beheaded Rezin," says Pul, in his annals; "I besieged and took the palace of

¹ Isa. ix. 1.

² Smith supposes Hosea's accession to have taken place in B.C. 729.

³ Schrader, p. 149. 2 Kings xv. 29.

Benhadad, his father, built on a high mountain. Eight thousand of the citizens, with their goods, I carried off into captivity. Five hundred and eighteen towns of sixteen districts of the kingdom of Damascus I reduced to ashes.”¹ The Bible adds that the population was led to Kir, which Josephus thinks was in Media, but others place in Armenia or even in Southern Babylonia. The great Syrian king, so long the embittered enemy of Israel, had at last vanished from among the powers of the world.

How long Pekah reigned is not known, for it seems necessary to shorten by one half the period of twenty years assigned to him as well as to lower the date; five different Assyrian and Greek authorities making it impossible to harmonize the chronology without these modifications. Hosea, whom Pul accepted as the vassal king over the now shrunken territory of Israel, was apparently a man of a nobler stamp. The payment of the heavy tribute demanded by the king of Assyria² galled a people which had fancied itself the first of the nations,³ and their new king, either from necessity or sympathy, took the popular side. A strong Egyptian faction existed in Samaria; perhaps in part from the old tradition of Jeroboam I. having found a home on the Nile in his exile, and having brought thence an Egyptian queen, but, still more, from the wily diplomacy of the Pharaohs, whose agents in all the courts of Palestine constantly urged alliance with their masters, and promised their help to any who refused to pay tribute to Assyria. In his difficult position Hosea seems to have tried to keep favour with the Great King,⁴ while secretly treating for assistance from So or Savah of Egypt, the

¹ *Schrader*, p. 153.

³ *Keilinschriften*, p. 145.

² 2 Kings xvii. 3.

⁴ Amos vi. 1.

second king of the Ethiopian¹ dynasty, in a projected revolt. But Assyrian spies in Samaria disclosed the treason to their master before it was ripe, and the doom of Hosea was settled. It was vain that he tried to be a good and true king,² seeking as far as he could to re-establish the worship of Jehovah. It was too late to save his country. Calf worship had indeed wellnigh ceased, for Pul had carried off the calf from Dan,³ and the one at Bethel was taken away by the Assyrians.⁴ Wishing to revive the old theocracy as far as possible, Hosea is said to have removed the frontier guards who turned back pilgrims anxious to go up to Jerusalem for worship. Things had gone too far, however, for any efforts to save the kingdom. The prophet Amos had not spoken of alliances with Assyria or Egypt, circumstances in his day not demanding that he should do so, but his successor Hosea—the same name as the reigning king—vehemently denounced them, now that they were

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 4. Schenkel, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 338. Birch's *Egypt*, p. 165. Savah is called in Sargon's annals, "The Sultan," and is distinguished from "the Pharaoh, king of Egypt." He was, in fact, the lord paramount, with an Egyptian king under him, at Tanis, besides many other petty kings throughout the Valley of the Nile and the Delta. *Keilinschriften*, p. 157. The affix *ka* was added in Egypt to the names of the Ethiopian kings. It is the article. Thus Seveh or Schava becomes Schabaka. In the Bible this is contracted to So. On the Assyrian monuments to Schava. Savah, though the second king of the dynasty, was regarded as its real founder, from his ability and deeds. Lenormant's *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. iii. pp. 350-1.

² 2 Kings xvii. 2. Josephus, however, speaks of him as a wicked man and a despiser of the worship of God. *Ant.*, IX. xiii. 1.

³ This is a Jewish tradition.

⁴ Hos. x. 8. Beth-Aven = Bethel.

in favour.¹ What his crowned namesake could have done otherwise, humanly speaking, is hard to imagine, for the help of God was promised only on the unfulfilled condition of Israel returning heartily to His service.

Pul or Tiglath-pileser II. had died in 728 or 727 and was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV.² A league had by this time been stirred up against Assyria by the intrigues of the Egyptian residents at Samaria and Tyre; Hosea, in alliance with the Phœnician city and perhaps some other Canaanite powers, undertaking to refuse tribute to Nineveh, on the strength of worthless promises of military aid from the Nile. To crush this revolt, Shalmaneser appeared in Palestine in 725 with his army.³ Unfortunately for Tyre, it had roused a bitter feeling against itself in the other Phœnician cities, leading them to throw themselves, as its foes, into the arms of the

¹ Hosea v. 13; vii. 11; viii. 9; xii. 1.

² =The god Shalman is good.

³ The notices of Jewish kings in the Assyrian inscriptions, compared with the received Bible chronology, show the following results.

ON THE MONUMENTS.	THE RECEIVED BIBLE CHRONOLOGY.
Ahab, B.C. 854. Battle at Kar- kar.	Ahab reigned from B.C. 918-896.
Jehu, 842. Tribute.	Jehu 884-857.
Uzziah, 745-739. He was at war with Pul or Tiglath-pil- eser, in these years.	Uzziah 809-759.
Menahem, 738. Tribute.	Menahem 771-761.
Pekah, 714. Conquered by Tig- lath-pileser.	Pekah 758-738.
Hosea, 728. Last year of his paying tribute to Tiglath- pileser.	Hosea 729-723.
722. Fall of Samaria.	Fall of Samaria. . . 722. <i>Keilinschriften</i> , p. 299.

Assyrians. A fleet fitted out by these betrayers of their country was, however, dispersed by the Tyrians with a much smaller force, and Shalmaneser was compelled to restrict himself to a blockade of the brave island-capital, which resisted stoutly for five years, before the end of which the Assyrian throne had changed hands.¹

Meanwhile, a corps of the invading army was detached against Samaria, and at once invested it. But the haughty capital of Israel defended itself nobly. A terrible calamity, however, ere long overtook it. Its king, Hosea, was by some means taken prisoner and led off in chains to Assyria, where he remained till his death.² As Hosea the prophet had foretold, he disappeared like the foam on water,³ and was utterly cut off in a morning.⁴ But though thus without its king, the city continued its defence with a stout heart; three years passing before its fall.

While Tyre and Samaria were thus engaged in a mortal struggle with their terrible enemy, Shalmaneser died, in the year 722,⁵ whether by conspiracy or of disease is not clear. Sargon, his successor, already a man of about sixty, never speaks of himself as his son, though in the boasting style of Eastern kings he claims to be the descendant of "the three hundred and fifty kings of Assyria." But whether an adventurer or the legitimate heir to the empire, he was supremely fitted for the dignity. His great deeds filled the world for the next

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, IX. xiv. 2. There are no annals of Shalmaneser in the Nineveh relics. The water by which the Tyrians supplied their wants, is said to have been got from a great spring which burst up through the salt-water bay.

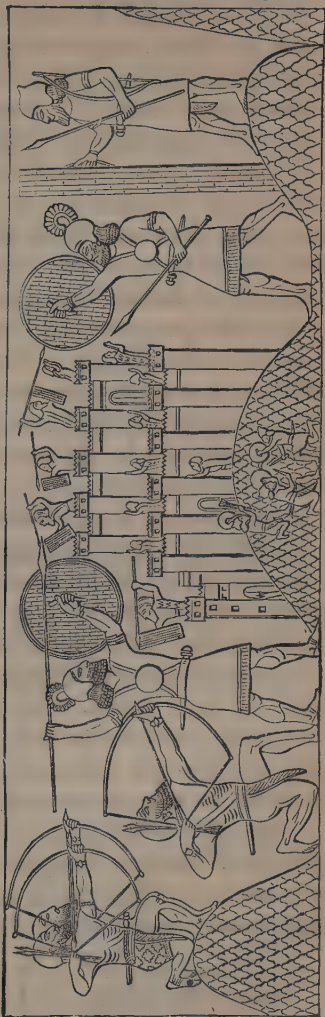
² Lenormant thinks he had been summoned to Nineveh, to justify himself, and not venturing to disobey, had been seized and put in prison on his arrival. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 354.

³ Hos. x. 7.

⁴ Hos. x. 15.

⁵ Smith, p. 91.

seventeen years.¹ Pushing on the operations against Tyre vigorously, he at last reduced it. But the siege of Samaria had in the meantime been so steadily and bitterly prosecuted, that the city fell in the first year of the new reign, B.C. 722. Fortunately we have Sargon's own account of it. "I besieged the city of Samaria," says he, "and took it. I carried off 27,280 of the citizens; I chose 50 chariots for myself from the whole number taken; all the other property of the people of the town I left for my servants to take. I appointed resident officers over them, and imposed on them the same tribute as had formerly been paid."² In the place of those taken into captivity I sent thither inhabitants of lands conquered by me, and imposed the tribute on them which I require from Assyrians."³ The Book of Kings strik-



SIEGE OF SAMARIA. KHORSABAD.

¹ He reigned from 722 to 705.

² *Schrader*, p. 158.

³ *Ibid.* p. 160.

ingly agrees with this statement.¹ The king of Assyria, it tells us, carried Israel to Assyria, and placed some of them in Halah, apparently on the upper course of the river Khabour, in North-western Mesopotamia, in a region known as "Gozan:" some in the "mountains of the Medes"²—the wild highland region on the east side of the Tigris, north of the Persian Gulf. "And the king of Assyria³ brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel." A passage in the annals of the first year of Sargon, in which Samaria fell, seems almost an echo of these words. "Having overcome the king of Babylon I carried away — of the inhabitants with their goods, and settled them in the land of the Chatti,"⁴ that is, in Syro-Israel. In a cylinder inscription we further read, "Sargon who subdued the people of Thammud—an Arab race of Arabia Petrea—of Ibadid, Marsiman, and Chayapu, after slaying many, carried off the rest to the distant land of the House of Omri" (Samaria).⁵ In the annals of the seventh year⁶ we are told, moreover, "I subdued the inhabitants of Tasid, Ibadid, Marsiman, Chayapu, the people of distant Arba, the dwellers in the land of Bari, which even the learned have not known, and which had never brought their tribute to the king, my father,—and transplanted the survivors and settled them in the city of Samaria."⁷

The dates of these records show that the forced immigration of heathen foreigners continued through a series of years; the first having been, as stated in Kings, from Babylonia. Besides the places mentioned in the annals,

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 6.

² *Sept.*

³ 2 Kings xvii. 24.

⁴ *Schrader*, p. 162.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁶ B.C. 715.

⁷ *Schrader*, p. 163.

however, the Bible, as we have seen, adds others, and supplies details in several cases.¹ Thus, many, of both sexes, were brought to the Samaritan country from Cuthah, apparently a town of Central Babylonia;² from Ava, which is not identified; and from Hamath, the well-known Hittite-Phenician city on the Orontes. This ill-fated place, the annals inform us, was taken by Sargon in the second year of his reign, 721-20. Reserving for himself 200 chariots and 600 charioteers, he sent off the people to Samaria and other lands, replacing them by settlers carried thither from distant regions.³ Some immigrants also came from Sepharvaim or Sipparis, a city of Babylonia.

Thus the northern kingdom finally perished, amidst wild convulsions. Stripped of its inhabitants, the land threatened to relapse into a wilderness. Beasts of prey, and notably lions, increased so much as to become dangerous—a calamity which seemed to the superstitious foreign settlers scattered over it, a judgment on them for their not knowing how to worship the local god. At their humble request, therefore, an Israelite priest was sent from Assyria to give them the needful instruction, and to set apart whom he could as his colleagues. But heathenism is difficult to eradicate, and the only result was the addition of the God of Israel to the gods of the different nations now in the land. The men of Babylonia still “made Succoth Benoth,” which may have been images of the great Babylonian goddess, Zirbanit;⁴ or perhaps “small tents in which were contained images of female deities”; or possibly, the “tents” in which their daughters

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 24. ² Schrader, p. 164. ³ *Ibid.* pp. 165-6.

⁴ The meaning of Succoth Benoth is unknown. See Herzog, vol. xv. p. 253. *Bibel Lex.*, vol. v. p. 429. Rawlinson's *Great Monarchies*, vol. i. p. 134.

committed impurity in the service of the idols. The men of Cuth made Nergal—the “lion-god—their national deity¹; those of Hamath worshipped Ashima, perhaps the Phenician goat-god Esmun;² the Avites, Nibhaz—apparently a dog-headed god—and Tartak, seemingly an embodiment of the evil principle. Still worse, the men of Sepharvaim, true to their ancestral worship of the sun-god, Baal, burned their children alive as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Annamelech, the male and female idols of Moloch worship. Judah was now all that remained of Israel, except a scattered remnant of the various tribes, who had escaped deportation, and lingered here and there in the north.³ Jerusalem, henceforth, became the centre of the true religion; on its fidelity the future history of the Church depended.

The ultimate fate of the Ten Tribes has been a subject of endless controversy. It seems beyond doubt, however, that they were ultimately lost—by intermarriage and the loss of tribal exclusiveness—among the nations to whose lands they were carried, in successive deportations, extending through many years. Some were settled in the districts already named; others were transported to Media, where we find them in the time of Tobit, at Rages, not far from Teheran in Persia.⁴ But while the Book of Kings indicates the regions to which the main stream of captives was turned, many were sent to widely distant parts of the vast Assyrian empire, as for instance to Hamath, in Northern Syria. Elam and

¹ *Schrader*, p. 167.

² This is the idea of the Jewish Rabbis, but *Schrader* says it has no foundation.

³ 2 Chron. xxx. 1-18; xxxiv. 6. Judah seems from this time to have assumed the name of Israel. 2 Chron. xxxv. 3

⁴ *Ewald, Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 659. Tobit i. 14.

Babylonia became the home of multitudes. Many more were carried prisoners to Egypt by the Nile kings, and many went thither voluntarily, while there was hardly a land of the Mediterranean whither vast numbers had not been sold as slaves.¹

¹ In 1 Chron. v. 26 it is said that the Eastern tribes were carried off to Halah, and Khabour, and Hara ("the mountain land" of Media) and to the river of Gozan, and that they remained there at the time when Chronicles were compiled—that is, apparently in the days of Ezra, about B.C. 536, or nearly 250 years after their deportation. In this verse Pul and Tiglath-pileser are mentioned as distinct monarchs, but this Schrader thinks is, beyond doubt, a corruption of the text. *Keilinschriften*, p. 133. On the whole subject, see Keil, *Die Bücher d. Könige*, p. 323. Menant, *Babylone et la Chaldee*, p. 141. The subject of the fate of the Ten Tribes will be treated more fully in the next volume





CHAPTER IX.

THE NORTHERN PROPHETS.

THE kingdom of the Ten Tribes had fallen, after a long anarchy of fifty years from the death of Jeroboam II. King after king had been murdered, and the throne had been seized at each new revolution by some fierce soldier chief, under whom matters went steadily from bad to worse. Rival factions had broken out as confusion and trouble increased. Old tribal jealousies had set neighbour against neighbour; Ephraim devoured Manasseh, and Manasseh devoured Ephraim.¹ Yet the nation, as we have seen, did not sink without a desperate struggle for life. Hosea speaks of a massacre at Beth-arbel, perhaps beyond Jordan;² perhaps at Irbid or Arbela, west of the Sea of Galilee, among the almost inaccessible hill caves in which, centuries later, the remnant of the people sought refuge from the Roman soldiery. The fortresses had been taken only after a fierce defence, in which many had preferred death to surrender. Mothers had thrown their children from the walls and flung themselves down to perish with them.³ But at last the bow of Israel had been finally broken in the great plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon,⁴ which had seen so many desperate struggles. The fall of Samaria after its heroic

¹ Isa. ix. 21.

² *Hitzig*.

³ Hos. x. 14.

⁴ Hos. i. 5.

resistance, had been followed by all the horrors of Eastern warfare. Children were dashed in pieces, and matrons ripped open;¹ the maidens and surviving men led off into captivity. As the end drew near, anarchy added its terrors within the walls to those impending without. The rich broke out into wild revellings and debauchery, to drown their despair,² and tumult and riot held carnival. The city on its surrender was forthwith levelled to the ground; its site made like "a heap of the field;" the stones of its proud palaces hurled down the hill side into the valley below; its very foundations laid bare; the gods in which it trusted carried off or beaten to pieces, and its spoil seized or burnt.³ Palace and hovel perished together;⁴ the places where its idol statues had stood were left desolate.⁵

Such an appalling catastrophe had not come without abundant warning. Men like Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah had watched its approach and raised their voices, strong in the might of inspiration, to bring about a timely repentance, and thus save the guilty land. But besides them, there must have been many others, true to Jehovah, but now unknown, who strove in their own sphere that the evil might be averted. Some Psalms still remain which bear internal evidence of having been composed in the last years of Israel.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel," wails out an unknown singer;⁶

"Thou who leadest Joseph like a flock,

Thou who sitt'st enthroned between the Cherubim—shine forth!
Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,

¹ Hos. xiii. 16.

² Micah i. 6, 7.

³ Micah i. 7.

⁴ Gesenius, *Iesaia*, p. 829.

⁵ Amos vi. 11.

⁶ Ps. lxxx.

Wake up Thy mighty strength and come to save us.
 O God, restore us, once again;
 Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved!

“O Jehovah, God of Hosts,
 How long will Thine anger smoke at the prayer of Thy people?
 Thou givest them bread of tears to eat;
 Thou lettest them drink a full measure of tears;
 Thou makest us ■ subject of dispute to our neighbours; (*who*
 shall take our land—)
 Our enemies mock us among themselves.
 O God of Hosts, restore us once again,
 Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved!

“Thou broughtest out a vine from Egypt;
 Thou didst drive out the heathen, and planted it.
 Thou didst make clear room for it;
 It took deep root and filled the land.
 The hills were covered with its shade;
 Its branches were like cedars of God.
 It stretched its boughs to the Sea,
 Its shoots to the Great River.¹
 Why hast Thou broken down the walls round it,
 That all wanderers by the way can pluck it?
 The boar² from the forest roots it up;
 The wild brood of the field make it their pasture!

“O God of Hosts, turn back, even now;
 Look down from heaven, and behold,
 And come to this Vine;—
 The stock which Thy right hand has planted;
 The sapling³ which Thou didst choose for Thyself!

¹ The hills of the south—the cedars of the north—the sea on the west—the Euphrates on the east. So widely had it spread.

² Assyria.

³ Or, Son. So *Gesenius*, *Hitzig*, *Delitzsch* and others. “Son” was used by the Hebrews, from the simplicity and poverty of their language, in many ways strange to us now. Hence, in the A.V. it is translated, Gen. xxxii. 15, colts; xlix. 22, bough; Job iv. 11, whelps; v. 7, sparks; Ps. lxxx. 15, branch; Isai. xxi. 10, corn; Lam. i. 16, arrows.

It is burnt with fire; it is rooted up;
 It is destroyed at the rebuke of Thy countenance!
 Let Thy right hand be on (Israel); the man of Thy right hand;¹
 The Son of man² whom Thou didst choose for Thyself!
 Then, (thus kept true), we shall not turn from Thee again;
 Thus quickened anew to life, we shall call on Thy name!
 O Jehovah, God of Hosts, restore us once again;
 Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved.”³

But not only had such exquisitely conceived laments been heard in the darkening hours of the northern kingdom; prophets had striven to rouse its people to reflection. The great Isaiah, who was in the prime of his life when Samaria fell, sent a stern warning from Jerusalem to his brethren of Israel.

“Woe to (Samaria), the proud crown⁴ of the drunkards of Ephraim! Woe to the garland⁴ on the head of the fruitful valley of those struck down by wine. The crown⁴—their fairest ornament—now fading away! Behold a strong and mighty one,⁵ sent from Jehovah—like a storm of hail, like a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty overflowing waters—shall dash it fiercely to the ground! The proud crown⁴ of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden under foot! The fading flower-crown on the head of the fruitful valley!

“Ephraim’s fairest ornament shall be to the foe like the (tempting) early fig, already ripe before the harvest⁶—which he who sees plucks at once, and swallows as soon as it is in his hand!”⁷

¹ The vine was planted by God’s right hand, ver. 16.

² The race. ³ *Kay. Hitzig. Ewald. Olshausen. Moll.*

⁴ Samaria crowns its hill like a garland on the brow of one at a feast. Wisdom ii. 7, 8.

⁵ The king of Assyria.

⁶ The usual time of fig harvest is August, but some ripen in special cases, even six weeks earlier. *Gesenius*. An early fig was a special delicacy. Hos. ix. 10. Mic. vii. 1. Nah. iii. 12. Jer. xxiv. 2.

⁷ Isa. xxviii. 1-4.

But Hosea, during his long public career of at least sixty years,¹ was especially the prophet of the sinking kingdom. His first appeals date from the closing reign of the great Jeroboam II., and were followed at intervals, till after Samaria had perished, by the others which make up his "Prophecies." Obscurely brief, he is often hard to understand; but there is an earnestness in his denunciations and a tenderness in his pathos that speak at once of his righteous indignation and gentle sympathy. It has been much disputed whether the opening chapters are an allegory or to be taken literally.² If the former, the prophet's wife, who turns to impurity, is Israel,—chosen by God as His earthly bride, but falling into idolatry and sin,—and her children are the nation which had sprung from her. If the latter, Hosea had shared in the misery of the land by marrying one who had turned aside to the vices so common. He had fondly loved her and she had borne him two sons and a daughter, but she had then left him, and been carried off as a slave, after falling into gross licentiousness. Eichhorn thinks the names of the children mark the advancing doom of the kingdom—Jezreel, "God will punish;" Lo Ruhamah, "who finds no more pity;" and Lo Ammi, "no more my people."³ But with a touching love, the prophet tells us that, though Israel be thus disinherited, it will not be so for

¹ The title says that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jeroboam II., Ahaz and Hezekiah. But from Jeroboam's death to that of Ahaz was fifty-eight years. His latest prophecy is not apparently later than the fourth or fifth year of Hezekiah. Thus the few chapters preserved of his utterances are all that the Holy Ghost has pleased to hand down from a ministry of over sixty years.

² Eichhorn holds strongly to the literal interpretation, Hitzig to the allegorical.

³ Eichhorn, *Die Propheten*, vol. i. p. 73.

ever. In the end it will return to God, and He will again be the Guardian of the land, and make His people glad. The glow of evening red, as the Book closes, forecasts the bright dawn of a glorious Messianic day.

An abstract of Hosea's different prophecies is the best commentary on the history of the times. They open by the announcement that the blood so ruthlessly and lavishly shed by Jehu, will be avenged by the destruction of the House of Israel itself in a terrible battle in the plain of Jezreel, which had witnessed his pitiless ferocity.¹ God will endure the sinful nation no longer, and cannot possibly forgive it. Judah will be spared as not equally guilty, but God's power, not her armies, will save her.² He cannot pity Israel, for, unlike Judah, it is no longer His people.³ But a better time is coming—the Messianic—when Judah and Israel shall unite under one head, of the race of David,⁴ and fill the land. God will then call them Ammi, “my people;” and Ruhamah, “pitied.”⁵

Turning from this fond vision of a happy future, Hosea now resumes his warnings. Israel must lay aside her sins lest God cast her out of the land. She has gone after idols which, as she thinks, have bestowed the material prosperity that marked Jeroboam's reign.⁶ But when God visits her in anger she will return to Him. She had ascribed her worldly blessings—her bread and water, her wool and flax, her oil and wines—to Baal,

¹ Hosea i. 4. In ver. 5 the destruction of the military power of Israel is expressed in the phrase, “I will break the bow of Israel.” The bow and arrows held the front place in warfare from the earliest antiquity till the discovery of gunpowder, in all nations except the few which relied on close combat with the sword. Pusey thinks that Hosea lived to see this prediction fulfilled in the battle with Shalmaneser at Beth-arbel. Hosea x. 14.

² Hosea ii. 7.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 8, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.* ver. 5.

but God will take them from her, and then she will see that they were not from Baal but from Jehovah.¹ Her joy will be turned to sorrow; there will be an end to her idol feasts, new moons, sabbaths, and great religious assemblies; her rich vines and fig-trees, the symbols of her prosperity, will be trampled under foot by enemies.² She will be punished for going after the Baals and forgetting Jehovah.³ But mercy will still temper justice. Carried off from her own land, but still followed by prophets, the Valley of Trouble⁴ will be a door of hope—affliction will reform her. She will again call God her husband,⁵ and He will make a covenant with her—the lower creatures joining in it—that, if she keep thus faithful, war will cease in the land and she will “lie down safely.” He will betroth her to Himself for ever. The tenderness of the prophet’s words in dilating on this is touching in the extreme. The very heavens will plead for the penitent that they may yield her once more their blessing, and God will fill them with the dew and rain, so long withheld, and these will feed the corn and wine and oil, and the cry of Jezreel—that is of Israel—will thus be answered. It will be His people and He will be its God.⁶

In chapter iii. the popular idolatry is again typified as impurity. Israel, forsaken by its Divine protector, because it has first forsaken Him, is symbolized by a

¹ Hosea ii. 10.

² Ver. 12.

³ Ver. 13. Verse 9 shows that the women of Israel decked themselves in their best at the licentious worship of the Baals, putting on their ear-rings (the same word is used for nose-rings) and their jewels, and burned incense to the idols.

⁴ Achor, lit. “troubling.”

⁵ Ver. 16. Ishi, lit. “my husband,” or rather “my man.” The very word “Baal” will not henceforth be heard. God will not have it, even if used towards Himself as meaning “my Lord.”

⁶ Ver. 23.

woman beloved of her husband, but now forsaken by him, for her manifold sins. Yet a conditional marriage contract is renewed with her, its final ratification depending on the full proof of her penitence during a lengthened trial. If Israel remained true to Jehovah during its exile, when far from its idols, He would bring it back and restore it under the rule of the House of David.¹ The loss of its independence; its king and court; its accustomed sacrifices; its ephod, abused to superstitious ends; its calves and idols, and even its house-gods,² consulted for oracles, would wake a yearning to return to God, and to unite with Judah.

Chapter iv. is a distinct address. The prophet fiercely denounces the wickedness and idolatry of the nation, and foretells their terrible punishment. He has pictured the exhaustless love of God towards them by the most striking images; love which no unfaithfulness could extinguish; love waiting to show its tenderness on the first sign of their penitence. Now, however, he has to proclaim their indictment, and the very depth of his sympathy makes his indignation at their sin and folly the deeper.

“Hear Jehovah’s word,”³ says he, “ye sons of Israel. He has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth, there is no goodness, no knowledge of God among them! They are perjurers, they lie, they murder and steal, and are adulterers; they have broken through all bounds,⁴ till one stream of murdered men’s blood touches another! Nature itself is in mourning for guilt so great; the men of the land fade away; the very wild beasts of the fields, and the birds of the air, and fish of the sea languish (in the drought and sorrow with which God has smitten you). Yet neither prophet nor heavenly voice

¹ Hosea iii. 1-5.

² Teraphim.

³ Hosea iv. 1.

⁴ Ewald says, “they break into houses” to rob and kill.

must reprove you; instead of that, you blame your priests, and contend with them.¹ But so much the more certain is your universal destruction. The people shall stumble, as it were in the day, and the dumb prophet that does not reprove you will stumble in the night, and the whole mother-land shall perish. Jehovah has said it! 'My people,' says God, 'perish for lack of knowledge of Me!² Because ye, O priests, have made light of knowledge and have not upheld My honour, I will degrade you from being My priests; as ye have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children! The greater you have grown in number, wealth and standing, the more you have sinned; your greatness, therefore, shall I turn to shame. You grow rich on the sins of the people; you are eager to have them do wrong, (for their sin-offerings and penance-gifts are so much the more). People and priest are thus alike guilty; and I shall therefore punish them equally for their sins! They will eat and not be satisfied; give themselves to impurity, but not increase; because they have left off to take heed to Jehovah!'"³

The sins of the priests lead astray the people, who copy their example.

"Impurity, wine,⁴ and strong drink dull the understanding of all; My people consult wooden images as oracles; they make their staff prophesy to them.⁵ Their love for idolatry and its foul license has led them astray; they have been faithless to God, their husband, and have forsaken Him. They sacrifice on the mountain tops; they burn incense upon the hills, under the oaks, and poplars, and elms of their heathen groves, because they like the thick shade with its impurities. Your daughters, seduced by a worship so gross, commit fornication; your daughters-in-law, adultery. Yet I would fain punish neither. Young and foolish, they are less guilty than the priests, for *they* go aside with the vile women of Astarte, and offer sacrifices with the temple-harlots, and the thoughtless women are thus led astray! If thou, Israel,

¹ The priest was the judge, in God's name, in many things.

² Hosea iv. 6.

³ *Ibid.* iv. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.* iv. 11-19.

⁵ They used staves with different magic inscriptions on them, or staves with different signs, and divined by them. Ezek. xxi. 21.

wilt thus commit fornication, oh, do not thou, Judah, at least, defile thyself! Go not over the border to Gilgal; go not up to Beth-aven,¹ and swear not by the calves. As Jehovah liveth, thus untrue to Him are you all, in heart! Israel has, indeed, become towards her God like a wild and furious heifer, but Jehovah will soon bate her pride and lead her, like a weak sheep, to the wilderness, to feed there! Ephraim is in love with his idols—leave him alone! When they have drunk till wine loses its relish they give themselves up to impurity; their rulers delight in such shameful orgies; but the storm-wind of My wrath will bear them away on its wings, and they will blush at these shameless feasts and offerings, followed by such debauchery.”

With chapter v. a new address begins; like the preceding, a stern indictment.

“Hear ye this,² ye priests; mark, thou House of Israel; listen O House of the King, for this indictment is against you! Instead of being protectors and upholders of the land, ye priests, and ye courtiers, have been like nets and gins for the people—like nets and gins spread on Mizpah of Gilead and on Tabor in Esdraelon! You have busied yourselves with multiplied sacrifices, ye revolvers! But I will punish you all! I know Ephraim, and Israel is naked before me. At this very time, Ephraim, thou art committing fornication with idols, and Israel is defiled with its sins. Your doings keep you from returning to your God; for the spirit of impurity is in your midst. You know not Jehovah! Jehovah, the Pride of Israel, witnesses against you, therefore, to your face. Israel and Ephraim fall by their iniquity; and Judah, also, shall fall with them!³ Israel will one day come to seek Jehovah, with sheep and oxen for sacrifices; but they will not find Him. He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have been unfaithful to Him; they have begotten alien children.⁴ Now

¹ Beth-el = God's House, changed to Beth-aven = House of Idols, some think of Beth-on = the House of the Sun. ² Hosea v. 1-7.

³ Their special sin in this case is not mentioned. It was perhaps a proposed alliance with Assyria or Egypt.

⁴ Their intercourse with idols has corrupted the faith of their households.

shall the moon-god whom they worship destroy them and their land!¹

Hosea seems, as he warms in his address, to see the punishment threatened, already approaching. Judah must warn Israel, and Israel, Judah.

"Blow the trumpet in Gibeah;² blow the loud trumpet in Ramah; cry aloud from Bethel, now the House of Idols, in thy hinder borders, O Benjamin!³ Ephraim shall be a wilderness in the day of vengeance; among the tribes of Israel have I made known what will surely be. Judah's princes, also; those that by joining in Ephraim's idolatries, move back as it were the landmark of Jehovah;⁴ on them will I pour out my fury like water!

"Ephraim is even now sorely oppressed; it is afflicted with judgment, because it chose to follow the commandment of Jeroboam⁵ instead of Mine. Assyria, My instrument, has already wasted its borders.⁶ I have been as a moth consuming it, and like a gnawing worm to Judah—to lead them to seek Me in whom alone is their hope. But, instead of this, when Ephraim saw his feebleness and Judah his wound, Ephraim sent an embassy to the Assyrian, and Judah sent to the king fierce, revengeful;⁷ but he could not cure you, he could not heal your wounds. Now, shall I no longer be like a moth to Ephraim, but like a lion. Now shall I no longer be like a gnawing worm to Judah, but like a fierce

¹ *Hitzig*. Ewald thinks this refers to the baleful influence attached at times to the new moon. ² Hosea v. 8-vi. 3.

³ "The foe is behind thee." *Hitzig*. *Keil*.

⁴ Deut. xxvii. 17. The idea seems to be that the encroachments of northern heathenism have taken away from Jehovah the land formerly His.

⁵ To worship the calves.

⁶ Assyria had desolated Gilead and Upper Galilee in the days of Tiglath-pileser. See p. 233. Before him, Shalmaneser II., in his attack on the kingdom of Damascus, had wasted the Hauran, which had been Jewish territory (p. 166); and Binnirari also had doubtless done much harm in his campaigns (p. 179).

⁷ *Vulg.*, Revenger. *Others*, fierce. *Ewald*, the Great King, Assyria.

young lion. Since slight punishment will not do, I must increase it; I, even I, Jehovah, will tear them in pieces and go away; I will carry off the prey and no man will rescue it from Me; I will go away from them to My own place, till they repent and seek My face. In their hour of need they will turn to Me, and eagerly cry: 'Up,' let us go back to Jehovah; for, as He has torn, so, He only can heal us; as He has smitten, He only can bind up our wounds! The shortest time² is enough for Him to restore us; on the third day we will rise from our present death and stand strong in His sight. Let us fear Jehovah; let us show Him reverence;³ then will His coming forth on our behalf be sure and glorious as the red of morning—refreshing and blessed as the rain, the latter rain, that waters the thirsty earth!"

The impression made by the prophet's words was unfortunately only passing, and his sorrow breaks out, perhaps on a future occasion, in a touching lament.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do with thee!⁴ O Judah, what shall I do with thee! Your goodness is like morning clouds, or like early vanishing dew! I have hewn you as men hew stones, by the judgments that have followed the words of My prophets; I have threatened you with death by the words of My mouth. Now must My final judgment burst forth resistless as the light. I delight in deeds of mercy, rather than the sacrifice of beasts! In the knowledge of God more than in burnt-offerings! But you break my covenant as if it were a mere human law; in your own land you have been faithless to Me! Gilead is a city of evil-doers, foot-printed with blood; gangs of priests, lurking for men, like robbers, murder them on the way to Shechem—such wickedness do they commit! I see horrible things in Israel, Ephraim goes after foulness; Israel is defiled; even Judah sows the seed of its future punishment."⁵

No details are given in the Historical Books, of the terrible years immediately after the death of Jeroboam II., when anarchy, weakness in the temporary rulers, the

¹ Hosea vi. 1.² Lit. two days.³ *Eichhorn*.⁴ Hosea vi. 4-11.⁵ *Eichhorn*.

haughtiness of the great, the tumult of factions, and the miseries of the people were bringing the nation to ruin. We only know that kings were raised to the throne to be presently murdered by rivals. Impotent at home, each new ruler sought strength by foreign alliances, if but to deprecate the anger of powers which he could not resist. The throne was the slave of the dominant army and nobles; its occupant had to flatter and propitiate them to keep his place or to save his life. The seventh chapter of our prophet gives us glimpses of this state of things.

“When I would have turned the captivity of my people; when I would have healed Israel¹—then were seen the misdeeds of Ephraim and the wickedness of Samaria! They are given to treachery; thieves break into the houses; robbers plunder in the streets. They never have it in their thoughts that I, Jehovah, note their iniquity. But now their sins have grown so great that they are like witnesses testifying against them; witnesses that have come before my face demanding vengeance. The chief men make the puppet king partner in their revels, the princes force him to uphold their lies. They are all adulterers; they glow with lust as the fiery oven heated by the baker, when he ceases to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough till it rises; they let their passions rest only so long as is needed to rekindle them more fiercely than ever.

“On the yearly birthfeast of our king² the princes drink themselves to a fever heat with wine; and the king goes with these revellers, hand in hand. Their heart glows like an oven in their treachery; through the night their plot sleeps—as does the baker’s furnace—in the morning it burns forth like a flaming fire. Then they burn like the heated oven, and consume their rulers; they destroy all their kings without one among them calling upon Me!

“Ephraim has joined fellowship with the heathen, and is scorched already, like a cake unturned in the oven. Foreign peoples

¹ Hosea vii. 1 ff.

² Proof that Hosea belonged to the northern kingdom.

devour his strength;¹ yet he does not note it; he is growing old and weak—grey hairs show here and there on him, yet he does not mark it. I, once the Pride of Israel, witness against him to his face, yet he does not turn to his God, Jehovah; in all his weakness he does not seek Him!

“Ephraim has become like a simple foolish dove; he calls on Egypt for help; he turns himself to Assyria. But, turn whither he will, I will spread My net over him; I will bring him down like birds of the air into its trammels; I will punish him as I have threatened to his tribes! Woe to them! that they have fled away from Me; destruction on them! that they have been faithless to Me! I would fain have redeemed them from their sorrows, but they only speak lies against Me. They have not cried to Me from their hearts, but have howled on their beds for the loss of their corn and wine, and then, slighting Me, have turned them to other gods! It was I who in old times strengthened their arm, yet they think only evil against Me! They do not raise their thoughts upwards to Me; they pretend to do so, but are like a deceitful bow, whose arrow promises what its performance only mocks. Their princes will fall by the sword of Assyria; for the hypocrisy of their tongues towards Me they will be mocked in Egypt, whose favour they seek.”²

In his earlier utterances Hosea had hinted at the foe destined to carry off Israel, but he distinctly names Assyria in his later appeals, as time disclosed more clearly the purposes of Providence. Now, in the eighth chapter,

¹ By the tribute paid them.

² The fearless denunciations of the great by Hosea, Isaiah and other prophets, finds a striking counterpart in the words of a Turkish dervish, quoted by Gesenius, *Isaia*, vol. i. p. 169: “If you ask who are the robbers and knaves in the land: I tell you they are the officers of government. But the high judges are still more unrighteous than these. As God liveth, they have brought the empire to ruin by their corruption! Fish stink, says the proverb, first, at the head! The cause of public decay may be known by looking, in the same way, at our great men!” Like this Mahometan dervish, the prophets were in reality the undaunted preachers of the day. See p. 271.

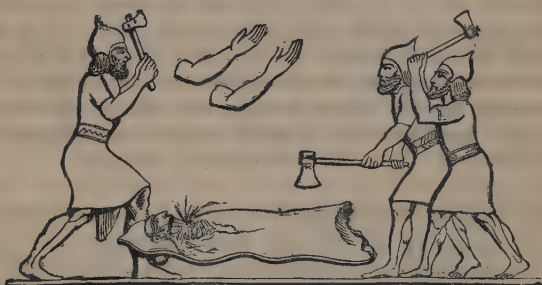
he sees the invasion and captivity near. Jehovah commands him to sound the alarm :

“Set the trumpet to your mouth.¹ Doom comes on Israel, the people of Jehovah, swift as an eagle! because they have broken My covenant and been faithless to My Law.

“In that day they shall cry to Me, ‘My God, we know Thee; we are Thy people.’ But I shall answer: ‘Israel has despised the right; pursue him, O enemy!’

“They set up kings without asking My pleasure; they set up princes whom I do not know; their silver and gold they have made into idols, as if to secure their destruction!

“Thy calf, O Samaria, is an abomination to Me; My anger burns against them that worship it. How long will they busy



ASSYRIAN SOLDIERS SPLITTING UP AND DESTROYING AN IDOL.

themselves with such uncleanness? for this calf is the work of Israel; the founder has made it; it is no god. The calf of Samaria will be split up into faggots for the fire! They have sown the wind and will reap the storm. A worthless idolatry can wake only worthless hopes. It is a seed that bears no stalk; its blossom can yield no meal; and if it did, the invader will consume it. Israel shall surely be swallowed up; they are already among the nations like a thing² which no one esteems.

¹ Hosea viii. 1 ff.

² The word is generally translated “vessel” in the A. V., but also—a jewel, an instrument, a thing, a weapon, etc.

For they are sending embassies to Assyria; acting alone, like the wild ass, which cannot be bound. Ephraim is trying to hire lovers (political support); but if they thus hire the heathen, I will soon bring the nations against them, and they will regret the tribute they have to pay to Assyria, the King of Princes.

Ephraim has increased the number of his strange altars, and these altars will bring him to ruin. Though I have written My Law¹ so minutely, he acts as if it did not concern him. They eat the raw flesh which they offer;² but Jehovah has no pleasure in sacrifices like these. He will soon bring their evil deeds to their mind, and punish their sins. They shall come anew to a land of oppression like Egypt. Israel has forgotten Me, his Maker, and has built himself strong castle-palaces. Even Judah has distrusted My protection and built herself fortified towns, but I will send fire into their cities; fire that will burn up their strongholds."

The people of the northern kingdom had their great festival of harvest, at which they gave tithes from their threshing-floors to the idol-priests, and held religious rejoicings. But they had little reason for such jubilation.

"Lead up no joyful dances, O Israel,³ like the nations around, for thou art unfaithful and forsakest thy God; thou hast loved to pay tithes to thy idols on the threshing-floors heaped with corn. But you⁴ shall not eat of the corn or drink of the wine-press; the new wine will mock your hope; for you will not remain in Jehovah's land; Ephraim will return to bondage like that of Egypt, and eat unclean food⁵ in Assyria. There, you will pour out no more wine offerings to Jehovah, your sacrifices will not be pleasing to Him; the flour you eat will be like the bread of mourners; to taste it will be to defile yourselves!⁶ Your bread

¹ The Mosaic law was thus perfectly known in those days.

² Contrary to Exod. xii. 9.

³ Hosea ix. 1.

⁴ The Hebrew pronouns change here from the second person sing. to the third person plur. I have substituted the second person plur., as more in harmony with English usage.

⁵ Another allusion to the Levitical law.

⁶ Deut. xxvi. 14. Jer. xvi. 7 (marg.). Ezek. xxiv. 17.

will serve only to stay your hunger; Jehovah will not allow ~~it~~ to come into His House as an offering. What will ye do then when your yearly feasts come round? What will ye do in your holy festivals? What, in the days of the feasts of Jehovah? For were the nation once forth from their ruined land, their Egypt-like oppressor will hold them fast; his land, like Memphis, with its thousand graves, will bury them!¹ Thistles will inherit their mansions adorned with silver! nettles will grow in their homes!

"The days of visitation are coming! the days of vengeance approach! Then Israel will see whether the prophet is a dreamer, the inspired man crazed or mad! The evil days come for the greatness of thy guilt; for thy bitter persecution of God's servants. Ephraim seeks oracles other than Jehovah; as for His prophet—the net of the fowler is spread by them in all his ways; they rage against him even in the house of his God.² They have sinned as terribly as they of Gibeah³ once, when Benjamin was well-nigh destroyed for its guilt; therefore God must needs punish their evil deeds—must visit them for their transgressions."

The tender heart of the prophet, filled with an intense love for his people, pauses here in his accusations and breaks out in a touching retrospect of their history. The love of God to them has been shown from of old, and He cannot leave them even now, if they will only return to Him at the eleventh hour. Jehovah speaking through Hosea's lips tells them—

"Israel,⁴ of old, was to Me like grapes in the wilderness to a faint and thirsty wanderer; I looked lovingly on your fathers as one looks on the first ripe figs in spring⁵—the sweetest and best of all. But their goodness soon passed away, for when they came

¹ This seems to be the sense; but the prophet may also allude to the multitudes of Jews who were carried off by the slave dealers to Egypt.

² They would not listen to his warnings, but turned fiercely against him.

³ Judges xix.

⁴ Hosea ix. 10 ff.

⁵ This is illustrated by Isai. xxviii. 4, where the text should be

to the land of Baal-peor they gave themselves up to that shameful god; they became abominable like the idol they loved, and now they continue in their evil ways.

"Ephraim—its might will fly away like a bird; there shall be no births, no bearing in the womb, no conception. If they bring up their sons to manhood, I will make them childless, so that men shall fail; yea, it shall be woe with them when I leave them! Why, indeed, should they have children, for I see in my vision as if Ephraim were exposing his children for a prey, and bringing them forth to the murderer¹ by his course towards God. Give them, O Jehovah; what wilt Thou give them? Give them a childless womb and dry breasts! Gilgal is the special scene of their wickedness; there have they made themselves hateful to me. For their wickedness I will drive them out of Canaan, My house. I will love them no more: all their princes are rebellious against Me. Ephraim is like a tree struck by lightning; its root is dried up; it will bear no fruit; but if it should, I will destroy the loved fruit of the womb.

read, "as the early figs, *before the summer.*" The "early figs" (Heb. "Bikkurah") form on the wood of the preceding year, and show themselves even before the leaves open in spring. They are generally ripe by the end of June, but in favoured positions much earlier. Dr. Otto Delitzsch in *Riehm*. Tristram has seen the fruit-buds of the fig rapidly swelling as early as the end of February, though the leaves did not unfold for a month later. *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 351. The fig harvest is in August; but along the shores of the Sea of Galilee Josephus tells us the ripe fruit could be plucked for ten months in the year. *Bell. Jud.*, III. x. 8.

¹ *Sept.* The murderer = the Assyrian.

Eichhorn translates the two lines—

"O Ephraim, like yon closely-built Tyre,
I see thee lead forth thy sons to the murderer."

Perhaps an allusion to the human sacrifices of Tyre, which, like Ephraim, worshipped Baal.

Hitzig translates them: "Ephraim, as I saw it (in a vision) is a young palm, set in the open pastures—unprotected—so that the flocks and herds devour her leaves and destroy her. She, by her course, is giving her children to the destroyer." He supposes the prophet speaking.

"My God has cast them away because they hearken not to Him; for this shall they be scattered among the nations."

The tenth chapter forms the opening of a new discourse delivered at another time, but still bearing on the great theme—the corruption of Israel and its imminent punishment.

"Israel (under Jeroboam II.) grew to be a luxuriant vine, hanging rich with fruit; but the more its fruit, and the greater its prosperity, the more its altars to false gods; the richer the land, the richer its stately idols. Their heart is divided between them and God; they are ready for punishment. God Himself will break down their altars, and smite in pieces their images.

"Then will they say, 'Jehovah is now no more our King, because we did not fear Him; He is now not our King, but our enemy; what can He help us?'"²

No wonder that Jehovah has thus forsaken them.

"They talk empty words, they swear false oaths, they make treaties to pay tribute,³ without intending to keep them; like the rank and poisonous poppy⁴ in the furrows of the field, so spring up the seeds of vengeance."

This vengeance will be, that Assyria will not only impoverish the land by the impost it demands, but will carry off even the calves in which Israel trusted for help.

"Grieve,⁵ O ye inhabitants of Samaria, for the calf of Bethaven in which ye trusted; the people will lament its loss, the black-robed⁶ priests will tremble with sorrow for it, for this their glory will be carried away from them!⁷ It will be carried off

¹ Hosea x. 1 ff.

² *Hitzig*.

³ Menahem's engagement to pay tribute to Assyria. 2 Kings xvi. 7; xvii. 3.

⁴ Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 447.

⁵ Hosea x. 5. ⁶ *Kemarin*. "Black-robed" idol priests. The word occurs also in 2 Kings xxiii. 5; Zeph. i. 4. The verb from which it is derived is translated "black" in Lam. v. 10.

⁷ Plural in the Hebrew, but the singular is used in the rest of the verse.

to Assyria as a present to the warlike king. Shame will seize Ephraim, and Israel will blush for the counsel it followed. Samaria must perish; her king will vanish like a chip carried off by the rushing stream; the high places of abomination will be laid waste—the scenes of the guilt of Israel! The thorn and the thistle will grow over their ruined altars. In that day they will cry to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ and to the hills, ‘Fall on us!’

“Thou hast sinned worse, O Israel, than they once did in Gibeah,¹ yet at that time thou didst escape; the war did not then bring destruction on thee. But now I will chastise thee in My wrath; I will gather against thee strange nations, and send thee bound into captivity with thy two idol calves.”

A new train of thought is now begun. The victories under Jeroboam II. are compared to the threshing of corn by cattle on the threshing-floors.

“Ephraim is a cow well trained for the threshing-floor, she had pleasure in treading out the corn; but I will lay a yoke on her fair neck; I will make her do slavish field work; Judah shall have to plough; Jacob-Israel, to break the clods.² If you wish to see better days, sow for yourselves righteousness; ye shall then reap mercy. Break up your fallow-ground and sow it thus, for it is high time to seek after Jehovah, that He may come and rain down blessing upon you.”

But they would not listen.

“Instead of doing this ye have ploughed-in seed of wickedness, and have reaped iniquity and eaten its bitter fruit. Because thou hast trusted in thy chariots³ and in the number of thy mighty men, the shout of war shall rise against thy tribes, and all thy strong places shall be destroyed, as Shalman laid waste Beth-arbel in the day of battle,⁴ when the mother was

¹ Judges xix.

² They will be reduced to slavery.

³ *Eichhorn* and *Ewald*, after *Sept.*

⁴ Beth-arbel is thought by Pusey to have been in the plains of Esdraelon, but it is apparently the place of that name near Pella, east of the Jordan. Shalmaneser III., of Assyria (781--772),

dashed from the walls after her children! Such things will your idolatries at Bethel bring upon you; before you dream of it the king of Israel shall utterly perish."

But denunciation and sternness are alien to the heart of Jehovah. He cannot utterly destroy Israel, which he loved of old, and still loves with an inextinguishable pity, notwithstanding all its sins. He will yet show mercy on them and compassionate their sorrows.

"When Israel was a child,¹ says God, I loved him and called him out of Egypt to be My son. But now, the more I call him by My prophets, the farther he wanders from Me. They offer sacrifices to Baal; incense to their graven images.

"Yet I, even I, taught Israel his first steps; I nursed him in My arms. But he did not care to know that it was I who healed and made him strong.² After his Egyptian slavery, I led him through the wilderness with gentle bands, with bands of love: I softly raised them from off his mouth³ and tenderly laid food before him. He shall not indeed return to Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king. Because, after they had forsaken Me, they refused to return. The sword shall whirl in his cities, it shall hew down his chief men and devour and consume the multitude, because of the course they have followed. For my people are bent on backsliding from Me; the prophets

marched against the cedar district of Lebanon in 775 and against Damascus in 773, and might on either of these campaigns have swooped down on the lands east of the Jordan. But there was also in Hosea's day, a King Salman, of Moab, tributary to Pul of Assyria. Crushed by Jeroboam II. he may very probably have risen in revolt after the death of that king and overrun Gilead and Bashan, destroying Beth-arbel among other places. The incident would in this case have been the more impressive to the prophet's audience from having happened so recently. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 282-4. Oliphant's *Land of Gilead*, p. 106.

¹ Hosea xi.

² *Eichhorn*.

³ Hosea reverts to the common figure of an ox used in the field.

have called them to a nobler life, but they will make no effort after it.

"Yet, how shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I abandon thee, O Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah?¹ How shall I destroy thee like Zeboim?¹ My heart within Me is turned towards thee; My pity is awakened. I will *not* carry out the heat of My wrath, I will not utterly destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man. I, who dwell in the midst of thee, am holy, and I will not enter² into your city, to overthrow it for ever."

Israel would not be finally destroyed, but sent into captivity, for their good, that God might hereafter bring them back.

"They shall, one day, walk after Jehovah when He calls them with a great voice like that of a lion; for with such a loud sounding voice He shall call them. Then will His sons, once more faithful, hasten from the west; hasten, swift as a bird, from Egypt, and as a swift dove from Assyria, and I will again place them in their homes. Jehovah hath said it!"

The twelfth chapter presents us with another of Hosea's orations. Like some of the preceding it takes the form of sad and faithful reproof.

"Ephraim has compassed me about with lies;³ the House of Israel has compassed me with deceit: Judah is ever inconsistent towards God; towards the Holy One, who fulfils His threatenings.⁴ Ephraim runs after the wind and chases the storm; day by day his falsehood and guile increase. He makes treaties with Assyria, and at the same moment sends oil⁵ by his embassies,

¹ Two of the cities of the plain destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. *Hosea must have known the record in Genesis.*

² "Come in fury." *Ewald. Keil. Wünsche.*

³ Hosea xi. 12 ff. ⁴ *Hitzig. Eichhorn.*

⁵ Oil was the most highly esteemed product of the land and thus worthy to be sent to the king of Egypt. No doubt a large quantity was forwarded.

as a gift to the king of Egypt.¹ Jehovah has a controversy² also with Judah. He will visit Jacob³ according to his deeds; He will punish him according to his doings. In the womb he held his brother's heel; in his manhood he strove with God, yea, he strove with the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication to him. He, (God) will be found of us at Bethel, and there will He speak with us; He, Jehovah, the God of Hosts, Jehovah is His name. Turn thou, therefore, O Jacob, to thy God; practise mercy and right, and cleave ever to thy God!"

The wealth of Phenicia had been gained by trade, but its people had a terrible name for lying and unfairness in their dealing. They could therefore be justly accused and deserved to suffer. Israel in Jeroboam II.'s day had also risen to wealth and power, but they maintained that their prosperity was from God and drew with it no reproach.

"The Canaanite deals with false balances:⁴ he delights in roguery. But Ephraim boasts, as compared with him, that he, also, 'has grown rich and great, and has gained treasure; but all his riches have been gained honestly, without guilt which might bring punishment after.'"

Jehovah challenges this; and though they say they are not guilty, will surely punish them.

"Yet I, Jehovah, whom thou slightest, thy God since thou leftest Egypt ages ago, will send thee forth to dwell again in tents,⁵ as thou still dost, for thy pleasure, at the yearly religious feast. I have warned you by the prophets; I have made one vision follow another; I have caused vivid addresses to be delivered, to turn you back to Me; yet Gilead has become a land of heathen wickedness, and will surely be brought to nothing.

¹ Menahem was playing off Egypt against Assyria.

² Properly, a "charge against."

³ Israel—here, perhaps for both kingdoms.

⁴ Hosea xii. 7 ff.

⁵ Will cast them out of their settled homes.

They sacrifice to bullocks at Gilgal, and therefore will their altars be overthrown and become like heaps of stone, here and there, on the furrows of the field.”¹

The past history of Israel shows how, even in the darkest hour, God had cared for it.

“Jacob fled to the plains of Aram,¹ Israel served Laban as a slave there, for a wife; for a wife he tended sheep: yet God watched and guarded him with loving care. By a Prophet² Jehovah led Israel forth from Egypt, by a Prophet He preserved him in the wilderness. But Ephraim has now rebelled and turned aside, though pressed by no such need or danger and has thus provoked God to bitter wrath; therefore shall Jehovah leave him to his blood-guiltiness; his Lord shall avenge the dishonour done to Himself.”

The next discourse points once more to the idolatry of Israel as its ruin.³

“When Ephraim spoke, of old, there was trembling in the peoples round, and he raised himself to glory as a separate kingdom. But since he went aside to Baal his might is gone. Yet, still, they sin more and more; they make molten images of their silver; idols, only the work of craftsmen, according to their fancy. To these the priests who offer men as sacrifices make prayers; they kiss the calves.⁴ Therefore shall they be like the morning cloud and like the dew which vanishes in the early hours,⁵ like chaff driven by the stormy wind from the threshing-floor; like smoke blown away from the open lattice.⁶ Yet I am Jehovah, thy God; since the day when I led thee from Egypt, hither, thou hast known no mighty God but Me, for there is no true Saviour beside Me. I knew thee in the wilderness; in the land of glowing heat; thou wast filled with the rich pasture that I gave thee;

¹ Hosea xii. 12.

² Moses.

³ Hosea xiii.

⁴ *Hitzig. Schmoller.* What better proof of Ephraim's folly and sin could there be than that they should offer *men* to calves?

⁵ See p. 349.

⁶ The Hebrews had no chimneys. The smoke found its way out at the windows and the door.

thou wast filled and thy heart waxed proud; therefore thou hast forgotten Me.

"But now I am become to thee like a lion; I lurk in the way for thee like a leopard;¹ like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will seize thee; I will tear out thy heart; I will feed on thee like a hungry lioness; the wild beast of the field will devour thee."²

After this outburst of Divine indignation, the tenderness of the prophet again bursts forth. His very sternness is the utterance of love. The God whose they are still, yearns for them, and cannot let them perish.

"O Israel,³ it has been thy destruction that thou hast set thyself against Me, thy Help! Where is now thy King,⁴ that he may save thee in all thy cities? Where are thy Judges, of whom thou saidst 'Give me a King and Princes'? I have once and again given thee a king in my wrath and taken him from thee in mine anger. The iniquity of Ephraim is recorded, sealed up, and preserved in the archives of God. The sorrows of a travailing woman come on him; he is a foolish son, he comes not forth from his sins in this the moment when spiritual birth is nigh.⁵ If he did, I would save him from the hand of the grave, I would redeem him from death! Then would he say, O death, where are thy plagues! O grave where is thy destruction!

"But, as he will not repent, pity shall be hid from Mine eyes!

"Though he boast of his power and greatness, for his very name means 'the doubly fruitful,' the east wind will come, the wind of Jehovah,⁶ and shall blow from the wilderness, and dry up his brooks, and sand up his springs. He will plunder your costly treasures, and in that day Samaria will sorrow for having rebelled against her God: she will fall by the sword: her children shall be dashed in pieces; her matrons ripped open!"

¹ The leopard was formerly common in the Holy Land. Thus we have Beth Nimrah, "the house of the leopard," in the tribe of Gad. Num. xxxii. 3.

² The plural pronoun is used in the Hebrew, but the singular is continued to suit the English idiom. ³ Hosea xiii. 9.

⁴ Spoken after King Hosea had been taken prisoner and carried off, with many of his chief men.

⁵ A paraphrase of the text.

⁶ The Assyrian.

The close of the prophet's appeals is near, but he cannot end without one more attempt to win back his people to God¹:—

“O Israel, return to Jehovah, thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to Jehovah; say to Him: ‘Forgive all our sin, and receive us graciously; when we come with our prayers, the offerings² of our lips. Asshur shall not, henceforth, be our reliance; we will not trust to the horses of Egypt;³ we will no more say to the work of our hands, “Ye are our gods”; O Thou, in whom, alone, the fatherless⁴ findeth mercy.’”

Then shall the answer come from Him who waits to be gracious and delighteth to forgive:—

“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for My anger is turned away from him. I will be like the dew unto Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like the olive-tree; his smell as Lebanon. Once more shall they that dwell under the shadow of his hills have harvests of corn, and flourish like the vine; they shall be famous as the glorious wine of Lebanon. Say, O Ephraim, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’ Then, will I, Jehovah, say, ‘I have heard and observed thee—I shall be to thee as an ever green fig-tree,⁵ from me is thy fruit found.’”

The prophet, in conclusion, asks—

“Who is wise, so as to understand this? Prudent, that he may

¹ Hosea xiv.

² Lit., “bullocks.”

³ Egypt was famous for its cavalry.

⁴ Israel felt itself fatherless now, and pleaded for God to become its Father once more.

⁵ *Vulgate* = fir. *Sept.* = Juniper bush *German* = fir. *Heb.* = cyprus. (With the cedar, the glory of Lebanon.) Noyes has “olive-tree.” Eichhorn, “fig-tree.” The fig-tree appears more suitable for fruit suited for food.

know it? For the ways marked out by Jehovah are right, the just walk in them safely, but the wicked shall stumble therein."

Such was the language in which the inspired preacher spoke to the people of Samaria and Israel more than 2,600 years ago. The deepest emotion, the intensest earnestness breathe in every word. He is moved, here, to the tenderest pathos at the prospect of the ruin of his country; there he bravely denounces its sins, with no regard to his personal interests or safety. The profoundest confidence alike in the promises and the threatenings of God glows in every utterance. Nor can there be a more touching enforcement of the quenchless and all-patient love of Jehovah to His people than these wondrous discourses present. The most striking figures are used to embody this pervading thought. God is the Husband of Israel and loves her even after her unfaithfulness; brings her back by tender words, and longs for her love to return, that He may pour forth His own love to her again. Even the awful glory of the Divine holiness, which threatens to consume the sinful nation, is only the radiance of eternal benevolence. The God, who loves so deeply, demands to be alone adored. Wrath may burn for a time, but infinite pity, amidst all, anticipates the time when the unfaithful one will come back and make it possible to shed on her the abiding sunshine of heavenly favour.¹

¹ I have spoken only of the love of God to Israel as a nation, in its historical relations in Hosea's day. But I do not forget or overlook the far deeper and more glorious significance of the Divine promises in the disclosure of redeeming love through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, nor the far wider application of God's threatenings as bearing on every soul of man that doeth evil.



CHAPTER X.

THE OPENING OF ISAIAH'S MINISTRY.

TO understand the prophets it is above all things necessary to know as fully as possible the history of their times, for, as we have seen in the cases of Joel, Amos, and Hosea, they were preachers of righteousness to their contemporaries as well as seers who revealed the distant future. The present, indeed, was their especial concern, though the Spirit of God used them to foretell, when it was thought fit, the events of succeeding times.¹

¹ "The prophets were the preachers not the predictors, the forthspeakers of God's eternal plan and methods of governing men, not the foretellers of particular events, of and to their nation. So our Lord and His Apostles understood the word. The sermons of a Latimer at Paul's Cross, of a Luther at Worms, of a Knox before the Popish queen and nobles, the field preachings of a Wesley or Whitfield—and, within narrower limits, the orations of a Burke in defence of justice, laws and institutions—these, taken with the lives and acts, and, when need was, the death of the men, are the true counterparts of what Isaiah and the rest of the Hebrew prophets thought, did, and suffered." Sir E. Strachey's *Hebrew Politics*, p. 6.

"They denounced oppression and amassing overgrown properties, and grinding the labourers to the smallest possible pittance; and they denounced the Jewish High Church party for countenancing all these iniquities and prophesying smooth things to please the Jewish aristocracy." Arnold's *Life*, p. 225.

The empire of Assyria was the great object of men's thoughts and fears in the eighth century before Christ. Its seat lay in the region of two mighty rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris, far to the east and north-east of Palestine, from which it was separated by the Syrian desert, which runs up like a huge wedge or triangle, almost to the foot of the vast chain of mountains extending from Asia Minor to Armenia. Necessitated by this impassable barrier to go up the Euphrates before they crossed over to Western Asia, the Assyrian armies could reach Palestine only from the north, and are hence always spoken of as coming from that quarter. The original capital of the empire lay on the west bank of the Tigris, some miles south of Mosul, at a spot now known as Kaleh Schergat, and took its name Assur, from the chief deity worshipped by its citizens—Assur, "the good god."¹ This eponym passed thence to the whole region inhabited by the Assyrian people, even after the capital had been transferred farther north, to Nineveh, on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite the town of Mosul, at a point where the Greater Zab falls into the larger river. In this territory, almost the same as that known to the Greeks as Adiabene, the future empire had its cradle; the Armenian mountains girding it on the north; the Lesser Zab on the south; and Media on the East. Assyria proper was, thus, on the north and east, a mountainous country; but these highlands, clothed with the oak, the sycamore, the plum, the poplar, the sumac, and other trees, sink gradually into plains on the south and west. The climate was thus comparatively cool in the upper districts, while abundant streams flowing from them created a rich vegetation in the burning lowlands. The almond and mulberry, the orange, lemon, pome-

¹ *Schrader*, p. 8.

granate, apricot, and vine ; melons, apples, pears, plums, and cherries, flourished in different districts ; with grain of all kinds, hemp, and even cotton. Inferior date palms and a few olives grew in the plains, but the citron trees were especially famous. As a whole, however, Assyria was very destitute of large timber. The sculptures of Nineveh show that the country abounded anciently in hares, deer of various kind, dogs, oxen, sheep, goats, the camel, the buffalo, the wild ass, the lion ; eagles, vultures, ostriches, the partridge and other birds. The inhabitants belonged, like those of Babylonia, to the Semitic branch of the Caucasian race.¹ The language of both countries was the same, and so, in all essential respects, was the religion, that of Babylon being the elder. The writing of the Assyrians, moreover, is only a simpler form of the Babylonian. Their government was a repetition of the common type of Oriental despotism ; unrestricted power being in the hands of the monarch. In contrast to the mass of the community he gloried in the number of the inmates of his harem, for not even natural laws were allowed to circumscribe so great a king. One wife, however, held the first place, and Sardanapalus—Asurbanipal—is even sculptured sitting at a meal with his queen. Eunuchs abounded, as keepers of the royal seraglio ; their chief bearing the title of Rab-saris.² They were also prized for a similar ignoble purpose in the harems of the great nobles, but they formed in addition the chief representatives of Assyrian art and science, and largely engrossed the profession of scribes, though this was shared by some who were not of their class. As elsewhere in the East, they often rose to very high posts.³

The government of the provinces was in the hand of

¹ Gen. x. 11.

² 2 Kings xviii. 17.

³ *Ibid.*

great officials, called Sagans, or Viceroys, who, in conquered districts, took also the title of the former ruler, as "princes" or "kings." The highest officers of state were the Tartan,¹ or commander-in-chief; the Rabshakeh, the chief of the staff;² and the Rabsaris. The whole State was organized on a strictly military footing, and to this the rulers of Nineveh owed the enormous political success they attained at the head of so warlike a people.³ They were not, however, indifferent to art or science, the latter of which they largely borrowed from the Babylonians. Astronomy and mathematics were special studies among them, and indeed passed from Assyria to the natives of Western Asia. The day was divided into hours,⁴ with sub-divisions, our minutes and seconds,⁵ and they used the Babylonian weights,—the talent, mina, and shekel.⁵ They, rather than the Egyptians, were the teachers of the Greeks, not only in architecture, but in the plastic and other arts, and the artistic working of metals. Laborious chroniclers of the national history abounded; each king leaving copious annals of the events of his reign. Great care was bestowed on the preparation of chronological lists. Nor were the refinements of general literature neglected. Treatises on the language and its grammar, on religion, geography, and much else have come down to us. The Assyrians and Babylonians had each a poetry of their own, marked by depth of feeling and religious enthusiasm, and similar in rhythmical structure to the Hebrew psalms. They had even epics, which the Hebrews did not attempt; one known as "The Descent of Istar to Hades," being the principal example found as yet.

¹ Isa. xx. 1. ² Kings xviii. 7.

³ *Lenormant*. "A high military official." *Schrader*.

⁴ Isa. v. 27. ⁵ *Herod.*, ii. 109. ⁶ *Assyrien*, in *Riehm*.

The religion of the two nations thus inter-related was fundamentally a star worship, but in the oldest times this was accompanied with a kind of Dualism. In the form in which it meets us it could not have been originally of Semitic origin, for even the desert Arabs have nothing at all similar. Their star worship, so far as it can be traced, is of a totally different nature. The Assyrian ideas can only, therefore, have been derived from the ancient race, apparently of the Turanian type, from which their writing was borrowed—the original inhabitants of Chaldæa, whom the Semites invaded from the south.¹ The godhead was represented among that primitive people by an eight-rayed star, and in keeping with this, the first worship of Babylonia and Assyria was directed to the sun, moon, and five planets, from which the week of seven days, and the names of those days, were derived.² The sun was called Samas,³ the Baal or “Lord” of Western Asia; the moon god, Sin. The planet Mercury was the god Nebo. Venus, as the morning star, was Istar—the Astarte of the Canaanites; as the evening star, Beltis or Baaltis—the Asherah of Palestine. Saturn was the god Adar or Adarmalik; the Adrammelech of Scripture. Shortened to Malik, it became the Canaanite Molech, or Moloch, or Milcom. This planet was further known as Kewan among the Syrians, Persians, Arabs, and Palestine nations, and also as Sakkuth.⁴ Jupiter was the god Merodach, known also as Bil, or Bel, “The

¹ Vol. i. p. 268 ff.

² The lunar month was divided into four weeks of seven days—the seventh being a Sabbath. But they were fixed on the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th of the month, so that between the last Sabbath of one month and the first of another, more than seven days elapsed. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 14.

³ Heb. Shemesh.

⁴ Amos v. 26.

Lord." Mars was the god Nergal. These five gods were subordinated to the god Anu, who was, besides, supreme over two non-planetary gods, Nisroch or Ea, and Anos. The god Dagon, the "great fish," was worshipped as the emblem of vital fertility. Bin, Rammon, or Rimmon, was the god of thunder and of the atmosphere. There were, further, evil spirits of the night—Lil and Lilith,¹ male and female. The god Il, or El, moreover, afterwards supplanted in Assyria by the god Assur, remained as a dim recollection of the true god. Each of the gods had a female counterpart, such as Anat, Beltis, or Baaltis. Nor did those I have named by any means exhaust the Pantheon.

Based on the worship of the forces of nature, the Assyrian religion, like that of all Western Asia, was profoundly gross and sensual. Nothing laid to the charge of the gods of Palestine is too foul to be applied to those of Nineveh.

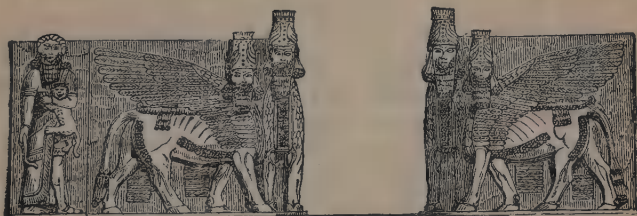
Unlike most Asiatics, the Assyrians were a fierce and warlike race; showing their nature even in their field sports by preferring to hunt the lion and the wild bull rather than gentler animals. The invasion by their armies was as "a tempest of hail and a destroying storm," or "a flood of mighty waters."² Nineveh was a "bloody

¹ See (Heb.) Isa. xxxiv. 14. See A. V. "screech-owl;" margin, "night-monster." According to the Rabbis, Lilith was a spectre which took the form of a finely-dressed woman, and waylaid and killed children. Buxtorff says, that the German Jews in his day wrote with chalk on the corners of the room where a child was born, and on the bed, "Come, Adam and Eve: begone Lilith." They wrote up also the names of the three angels of medicine and healing—Senoï, Sansenoï, and Sammangeloph. Lilith had been originally a demon wife of Adam. *Lex. Heb. and Chald.*, s. v. Gesenius, *Isaia*, vol. i. p. 915 ff. *Eisenmenger*, vol. ii. p. 413 ff.

² Isa. xxviii. 2.

city" in the eyes of the Hebrew prophets.¹ Prisoners might be spared to toil as slaves, but the terrible cruelties inflicted on vast numbers of them after a battle or a siege have been already quoted in the words of an Assyrian king himself.² To impale, to flay alive, to blind, to lead with rings through the lips, were only some of the forms of torture.

Nor could the Assyrians be said to have the best virtues of the brave; for as a nation they are branded as treacherous, untruthful, and lawless.³ No treaty could bind them; might was right, and when interest seemed to demand it, they "regarded no man."⁴ Their pride was that of a race which looked on all others as their natural inferiors.⁵



GATEWAY OF SARGON'S PALACE, KHORSABAD.

The god Ninip, strangling a lion, stands on the left hand.

The grandeur of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, has been realized only in recent times through the excavations made in its ruins. Those vast groups of mounds, widely isolated from each other, have been supposed by some to have been enclosed in a common rampart, but no traces of such an erection have been as yet discovered,

¹ Nah. iii. 1.

² Vol. ii. p. 399.

³ Isa. xxxiii. 1. Nah. iii. 1. Jonah iii. 8.

⁴ Isa. xxxiii. 8.

⁵ Zeph. ii. 15. Ezek. xxxi. 10, 11. Isa. x. 7-14; xxxvii. 24-28.

and each mound is walled completely round. In each of them however, the ruins of great palaces have been found, their lofty gates flanked by colossal human-headed lions or oxen; their countless halls lined with huge slabs of alabaster, covered with representations of the military, civil, and religious glories of the king, and scenes taken from his feats in the chase. The palace of Sardanapalus—Assurbanipal—was of vast dimensions. Its entire length was at least 350 feet, and its breadth almost as great; while the court before it was 120 feet long and 90 broad. Temple towers rose in steps in the cities, each step sacred to a particular god; a watch-tower, from which the heavens could be observed, crowning the whole.¹ All the resources of unlimited wealth and despotic power were expended, age after age, in making the palaces, temples, and public edifices of Nineveh the glory of the empire. Magnificent gardens for the pleasure of the monarch and his court, or of the nobles, varied the monotony of splendour. But the material employed for the construction of the grandest as well as the humblest dwellings or buildings made their obliteration certain after a time, when once they were deserted. Sun-dried bricks might last for centuries if carefully protected by plaster from the ravages of the weather. But, once exposed, they soon crumbled into shapeless mounds, hiding and preserving the alabaster slabs of palaces, with their pictures and writing; the tablets of baked clay, once in libraries and imperial registries and record chambers, and all the other relics of Nineveh. The great wall guarding the city was one of the wonders of antiquity; for Xenophon, who passed close by it on his retreat with the Ten Thousand, long after it had been left to moulder away, speaks of it as still 150 feet

¹ Vol. i. p. 275 ff.

high and 50 feet in width.¹ It was built of limestone to the height of 50 feet; above that, of sun-dried bricks. Gates pierced it at irregular intervals, lofty towers rising above them for their special defence. Guard-houses for the soldiers on duty were attached to these, and huge colossal human-headed bulls adorned each side. The ground within the gateway was paved with large slabs of limestone on which the marks of chariot wheels are still visible.

But this vast rampart was not the only defence of the city. Moats, the channel of the river, and long canals dug for the purpose, cut it off from the country around, and made its siege much more difficult.²

The Assyrian empire had been founded for many ages,³ and its people had shown themselves warlike and powerful, but their arms had not threatened Palestine till the 9th century before Christ. In the 14th and 15th centuries Egypt had been the great military power, and had marched its armies repeatedly over Palestine and Syria, sometimes as far as Nineveh.⁴ Even at that early date a fierce struggle had begun between Assyria and Babylon, the daughter and the mother, which was continued from generation to generation. In the 13th century the fortunes of the empire sank very low, but a great king, Tiglath-pileser I., who reigned from B.C. 1120 to B.C. 1100, once more raised its power, and at his death left a wide territory nominally subject to him, from the Mediterranean

¹ *Anab.*, III. iv. 10.

² The authorities for this sketch of the Assyrian empire are Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, vols. i. and ii. Smith's *Assyria*. Schrader, *Assyrien und Nineve*, in *Rehm*. Kneucker, *Assyrien und Nineve*, in *Schenkel*. Eisenlohr's *Geschichte*. Maspero's *Histoire Ancienne*, etc., etc.

³ B.C. c. 1820.

⁴ Thothmes III. did so.

to Babylon, Palestine, however, lying south of its sweep. His fierce career must have been the talk of men in the days of Eli and Samuel, for he was the Buonaparte of their age.

As often happens, however, in the East, the empire, created at such an expense of human misery, broke up at his death, and Assyria again fell into comparative insignificance. It was in this interval that the empire of David rose; the decay of the great monarchy on the Euphrates making his Syrian conquests possible. But in the time of King Asa of Judah, the fortunes of Nineveh were once more in the ascendant. A great king had risen. Yet there was again a temporary eclipse; nor was it till about the reign of Jehoash, the son of Athaliah, that the later Assyrian empire, destined to have such a controlling influence on the fortunes of the Jewish race, was founded by King Assur-nazir-habal.¹ Assyria had been shut out from the Mediterranean for two hundred years, but he cut his way to it once more. Tyre, Sidon, Gebal and Arvad brought him rich gifts in token of submission,² and for the first time the gigantic shadow of the new power fell across Palestine, alarming its various populations with an anticipation of the terrible fate that had struck down other lands.

Hemmed in on the east and north, as has been said, by the great mountain range which, under various names, stretches from Asia Minor to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, the west and south-west offered the only free outlet for the military ambition of the newly revived empire. Syria and the Mediterranean coasts having been once reached, it became henceforth the fixed effort of Assyria to conquer all the regions thus laid open.

¹ = "Assur protects his son." B.C. 883-859.

² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 43. Gebal = Byblos.

The progress of its arms from that time to the fall of Damascus and Samaria has already been traced.

Since the time of Shishak, the founder of the dynasty known as the twenty-second,¹ Egypt had been agitated and weakened by internal disputes and wars. That king had united the whole country under his sceptre and had been able to invade Judea with a resistless army in Rehoboam's day. His successors, however, confined themselves to their domestic affairs, cultivating the arts of peace, and averse to war and conquest, so that little is known of their reigns. But a custom had been introduced by him which was slowly bringing the monarchy to ruin. Before the rise of his dynasty, the high offices of State had been seized by the priests of Amon, who had thus usurped supreme power. To prevent the recurrence of such an evil, he confided the great trusts of the kingdom to members of the royal family, giving each a district and revenue to maintain his dignity. It was this practice which Rehoboam and other Jewish kings imitated towards their own sons, but its results were disastrous. These princes of Egypt before long aspired to independence; if not in the first generation, at least in the next. Relying on bands of Libyan mercenaries, some of them even aimed at the throne. Civil wars were incessant, till at last the Prince of Tanis succeeded in overpowering all rivals, and founded

¹ Brugsch was the first to notice that this dynasty was of Asiatic origin; but his theory of its being Assyrian in any political sense is questioned. Lenormant says that Shishak was the descendant of a Syrian, or, perhaps, Assyrio-Babylonian adventurer, who had come to Egypt during the twentieth dynasty. In the fifth generation from him Shishak made his way to the throne, subduing the petty kings and chiefs by whom the Nile valley had long been held. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 339.

a new dynasty, the twenty-third. But even under this sovereignty the petty kings, in great measure, held their own; no fewer than twenty dividing the land between them under their nominal head.¹

Determined to assert their authority, the Tanite kings fought hard against these local kinglets, and they, in their turn, unable to cope with the royal forces, committed the fatal error of calling in the aid of the Cushite or Ethiopian kings of Nubia and Lower Egypt. Of these, Piankhi, "the Living One," proved a ruinous ally, for he had no sooner overthrown the Pharaoh than he seized his throne and proclaimed himself king of all Egypt; founding the dynasty known as the "Ethiopian," under which Egypt was to enjoy a glimpse of its old renown.

While Assyria hung like a war-cloud over the north-east, and Egypt heaved with revolution in the south-west, a child was born in Jerusalem, destined to leave a greater name than all the monarchs or warriors of his age. The birth-year of Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, seems to have been about B.C. 760,² or perhaps earlier. He appears to have been a Benjamite,³ and was the son of one Amoz, of whom we know nothing beyond the name, for the various Jewish traditions, that he was no other than Amos the prophet, or a brother of King Amaziah,

¹ Isa. xix. 11, 13. Zoan = Tanis; Noph = Memphis. *Lenormant*.

² He entered on his prophetic office in the year that King Uzziah died (Isa. vi. 1). But we know from the Assyrian records that Uzziah was alive in B.C. 740. Supposing Isaiah to have been twenty years old when his prophetic activity began, this would take us back to B.C. 760. But Uzziah may have lived several years after B.C. 740.

³ Neh. xi. 7. Jer. xxix. 21. Ithiel = Immanuel = "God with us," originally, the name of Isaiah's son. Isa. vii. 14; viii. 8.

are mere unfounded inventions. His great-grandson¹ and his great-great-grandson are said to have been prophets; and the name of one of his great-grand-children, Kolaiah, "the voice of Jehovah,"² appears to show that prophecy was a special endowment in the family through successive generations. It is noteworthy also that when Isaiah married, he chose a wife who was herself a prophetess.³

Dwelling in Jerusalem, the centre of political life and activity, the social position of the future prophet's family seems to have been such as to give him every advantage. Instead of being lost in an obscure village, like his contemporary Micah, or passing his days on the hills, or in the sycamore groves, like Amos, he was surrounded from childhood by the stir and importance of the capital, in which he was hereafter to be the special councillor of the throne and an honoured personal friend of its great occupant, Hezekiah.⁴ Meanwhile, the significance of his name,—“Salvation is from Jehovah,”⁵—must have had a weighty influence on a mind so devout. His boyhood and youth, moreover, were passed under the healthy religious and political influences of the wise and good Uzziah, from the glory of whose reign his own character and sentiments caught a tone which marked them through life. In all probability Jeroboam II. was still reigning in Israel in his early childhood, but, as he grew up, the northern kingdom was sinking into anarchy and heathenism, in spite of the earnest and fearless preaching of Amos and Hosea. It is clear, indeed, from portions of his own prophecies, that those of his predecessors were

¹ Jer. xxix. 21. Neh. xi. 7.

² Hitzig translates it “There is a voice,” but Mühlau and Volck render it as in the text.

³ Isa. viii. 3.

⁴ Ewald's *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 169.

⁵ *Ibid.*

familiar to him.¹ Passages, allusions, and expressions, frequently occur, which show that the various books known as the Pentateuch,—though they may afterwards have been revised under the guidance of inspiration,—were then in existence, and were not only diligently studied, but taught to the pious young. Isaiah's writings show such a familiarity with the early sacred literature of his

¹ The following list of parallel passages is from Cheyne:—

Isaiah	i. 11-14;	Amos v. 21, 22;	Hos. vi. 6;	Mic. vi. 6-8	(against formal worship).
„	iv. 2;	„ ix. 13:	„ ii. 21, 22		(fertility in the Messianic age).
■	v. 11, 12;	„ vi. 5, 7			(luxury of the princes).
„	v. 20;	„ v. 7 }			(confusion of morals).
		„ vi. 12 }			
■	ix. 10-12;	■ ix. 11, 12			(the Messianic empire).
„	i. 20;		„ iv. 15		(spiritual adultery).
„	i. 23;		„ ix. 15		(law-makers, law-breakers).
■	i. 29;		„ iv. 13		(idolatrous groves).
„	i. 2;		Mic. i. 2		(prosopopeia of inanimate nature).
„	iii. 15;		„ iii. 2, 3		(strong figure for oppression).
„	v. 8;		„ ii. 2		(violent extension of landed estates).
„	vii. 14; }		„ v. 3-5		(the Messiah and His birth).
„	ix. 7; }				
„	xxx. 22;		„ v. 13		(idols to be destroyed in the Messianic age).
„	xxxviii. 17;		■ vii. 19		(strong figure for forgiveness of sin).

The following parallels are from Bunsen's *Bibel-Urkunden*:—

Joel iii. 1, 12 compared with Isa. xxxii. 15; Amos ii. 12 compared with Isa. xxx. 10; Amos iv. 11 compared with Isa. vii. 4; Amos v. 2, 15 compared with Isa. iii. 8, 26, x. 20; Hos. viii. 4 compared with Isa. xxx. 1; Hos. ix. 15 compared with Isa. i. 23. In the same way Amos had borrowed from Joel. See Amos i. 2; Joel iv. 16; i. 10. Amos ix. 13; Joel iii. 18. Hosea borrows from both. See Amos vii. 9, Hos. i. 4, 5; Amos i. 2, Hos. xi. 10; Amos ii. 5, Hos. viii. 14; Amos v. 5, Hos. iv. 15; Amos vi. 12 Hos. x. 4; Amos vii. 4, Hos. v. 7; Amos vii. 9, Hos. x. 8; Amos viii. 7, 8, Hos. v. 5, vii. 10, iv. 3.

people as could only have come from knowing it well in his earliest years.¹

- ¹ Isaiah i. 2 a. Deut. xxxii. 1, "Hear, O heavens."
 " xxx. 9 } b. } Deut. xxxii. 6, 20, "faithless children."
 " i. 3 " xxxii. 6, 28, 29, "Israel is without knowledge."
 " i. 6 " xxviii. 35, "Israel's sickness."
 " i. 9, 10 " xxxii. 32, "Sodom and Gomorrah."
 " i. 17, 23 } Ex. xxii. 22, Deut. xxvii. 19, "the orphan and the widow."
 " x. 2 }
 " i. 19 Lev. xxv. 18, 19; xxvi. 18, 25, "prosperity through obedience."
 " i. 24 }
 " iii. 1 } Ex. xxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23.
 " x. 16, 23 }
 " xix. 4 }
 " iii. 9 Gen. xix. 5, "their sin as Sodom."
 " iv. 5 Ex. xiii. 21; Num. ix. 15, 16, "a cloud by day," etc.
 " v. 8 Deut. xix. 14, violent extension of estates.
 " v. 10 " xxviii. 39, curse upon the vineyards.
 " v. 23 " xvi. 19; Lev. xix. 15, unjust judgment.
 " v. 26 }
 " xxxiii. 19 } " xxviii. 49, the swift unintelligible foe.
 " x. 26 }
 " xi. 15, 16 } Ex. xiv. 21, 22, the passage of the Red Sea.
 " xii. 2 b. " xv. 2, Song of Moses quoted.
 " xxx. 17 Deut. xxxii. 30; Lev. xxvi. 8, one thousand at the rebuke of one.
 " xiii. 19 " xxix. 23, overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 " xxiv. 18 c. Gen. vii. 11, "windows opened."
 " xl. 2 Lev. xxvi. 41, 43, compare 34, "guilt paid off."
 " xli. 4 Deut. xxxii. 39, "I am He."
 " xliii. 13 " " "none that rescueth out of My hand."
 " xli. 8, 9 }
 " li. 2 } Gen. xi. 31-xii. 4, call of Abraham and Israel.
 " xliii. 16, 17 }
 " li. 9, 10 } Ex. xiv. 21-31, passage of the Red Sea.
 " lxiii. 11-13 }
 " xliii. 27 Gen. xxv. 29-34, c. 27, Jacob's sins.
 " xliv. 2 Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 6, Jeshurun.
 " xlviii. 19 Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 12, Israel as the sand.
 " xlviii. 21 Ex. xvii. 5-7; Num. xx. 7-13, water from the rock.
 " l. 1 Ex. xxi. 7; Deut. xxiv. 1, law of divorce.
 " li. 3 Gen. ii. 8, Eden.
 " lii. 4 " xlvii. 4, compare xii. 10, Israel's guest-right in Egypt.
 " lii. 12 Ex. xii. 11, 51; xiii. 21, 22, "in trembling haste"; Jehovah
 in the van and in the rear.
 " liv. 9 Gen. viii. 21; ix. 11, the deluge and Jehovah's Oath.
 " lviii. 14 Deut. xxxii. 13, "riding over the heights of the land."

In B.C. 745, as we have seen, Tiglath-pileser, or Pul, seized the throne of Nineveh, and the fate of Western Asia was sealed. Occupied for some time with subduing rebellion in Assyria itself, and in curbing the nations on the upper Euphrates, he was at last able, in 743, as will be remembered, to demand tribute once more from the kingdoms of Lebanon and Palestine. Nor was it refused. Rezin of Damascus, Menahem of Israel, Hiram of Tyre, and the king of Hamath, moodily consented to pay it; but danger was no sooner past for the moment than a new Syrian league was formed, and the tax again withheld. The confederacy had been mainly brought about by the strong and warlike Uzziah of Judah, and Jerusalem was, doubtless, afoot from day to day—Isaiah among its other citizens—to see the departure of troops for the scene of war with the mighty enemy. In 742 the strong city¹ of Arpad—now Tel Erfad—the capital of a powerful State—had been attacked. It lay on a tributary of the Orontes, about ten miles north of the present Aleppo, and two hundred north of Damascus, in a rich plain. Knowing the terrible fate of a rebellious town, it resisted bravely till 740, but at last fell, and Palestine once more lay at the feet of the Great King. But fresh troubles soon broke out in Mesopotamia. Obedience was nowhere rendered except when secured by overmastering force, for

- Isaiah lix. 10 Deut. xxviii. 19, "groping like the blind."
 „ lxiii. 9 Ex. ii. 24; iii. 7; xxiii. 20-23, Jehovah's sympathy with Israel
 and the guidance of His angel.
 „ lxiii. 11 Deut. xxxii. 7, "remembering the days of old."
 „ lxiii. 14 Ex. xxxiii. 14; Deut. iii. 20; xii. 9, "rest in Canaan."
 „ lxx. 22 Deut. xxviii. 30, a promise modelled on a threat.
 „ lxx. 25 Gen. iii. 14, dust, the serpent's food.
 „ li. 2 Notice of Sarah; liv. 9, of Noah.
 „ lxiii. 11 Notice of Moses and Aaron, Shepherds of Israel, perhaps
 also, Miriam. Cheyne's *Isaiah*, vol. ii. pp. 219-20, 225.

¹ Schrader, art. *Arpad*, in *Riehm*.

government meant only oppression and wrong. The city of Calno rebelled,¹ and it was not till 738 that Palestine saw the invading armies of Assyria. Victory after victory having made Pul more terrible than ever, almost all the kings of the land except Uzziah, or if he had died before this, his valiant son Jotham, did homage to him forthwith, on being summoned. Rezin of Damascus, Menahem of Samaria, Hiram of Tyre, the king of Hamath, and "the queen of the Arabs," as we have seen, became tributary vassals.²

The death year of Uzziah had been marked by the public entrance of Isaiah on his prophetic office. Fifty years of prosperity and fame had, in some respects, lowered the national character. Wealth had brought the corrupting influences of luxury with it into the higher classes; military glory had fostered haughty pride in the people as a whole. Public virtue was decaying, and the germs of a fatal degeneracy were visible in all classes alike, in the tendency to idolatry and superstition, which was only too marked. Isaiah, though still only a young man, already deeply pondered this state of things. The vassalage of Israel was a sad foreboding of the fate in reserve for Judah, if it did not listen to the counsels of the prophets, its faithful preachers. Joel, two generations before, had stirred the land, and through him and Jehoiakim a great reformation had been brought about, culminating in the glorious period of Uzziah. But a reaction had gradually set in, like the ungodliness in the northern kingdom, against which Amos and Hosea had lifted up their voices. Penetrated with the solemnity of their utterances, Isaiah had caught their spirit. His thoughts dwelt on the spiritual state and temporal prospects of his people, till a lofty enthusiasm, such as marked

¹ Isa. x. 9. Gen. x. 10.

² See p. 232.

those who received prophetic inspiration, filled his whole being. In this frame he, one day, visited the temple. There, the pealing trumpets, the hallelujahs of the choirs of Levites, and the cloud of incense from the Holy place, intensified still more the religious emotions with which his soul was moved. Suddenly a vision was vouchsafed him, the first and last he is recorded to have received. He was at the moment standing before the priests' court—the Holy Place in front, and the mysterious Holy of Holies beyond. And now, while he gazed, it seemed as if the dimensions of the temple grew indefinitely greater. Through the wide gates of cedar, thrown open to let the priests enter to the golden altar of incense, the many coloured veil of the hidden inner sanctuary appeared to be drawn aside, and in the mysterious gloom there rose before him an august vision of Jehovah sitting on His throne over the ark, which seemed standing on the clear sky, between earth and heaven. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, as becomes the spirituality of the Divine Essence, no attempt is made to describe the awful Form that sat on it. But the skirts of His royal robes filled the great visionary temple which faded away into the eternities.¹ In the air, on each side of the throne, hovered mysterious guardians; two wings bearing them up, two veiling their faces in adoration, and two covering their feet, now naked, as became priestly service in the presence of the Almighty. His highest servants, they were there to minister to Him and proclaim His glory. As priests in the vast temple, they lifted their voices in lofty invocations; each calling to the other

Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of Hosts!
The whole earth is full of His glory!

¹ *Stanley*, vol. ii. p. 382. *Ewald*, *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 181.

till the very posts of the gates, seen far off by the prophet, seemed to tremble with the sound, and the whole temple was filled with the incense of their praise.¹ The call of Isaiah to his prophetic office was a great moment in the history of the kingdom of God, and could not be more fittingly honoured than by the vision of the Almighty, thus seated 'in majesty, attended by His heavenly ministers, to give forth a commission of so weighty an importance in the advancement of His rule among men.² It was befitting, moreover, that the vision should mingle priestly service with its royal majesty, for it was no earthly king who was thus revealed, but the Holy God.

Such a spectacle might well overpower mortal and sinful man. Isaiah had never before realized so fully the greatness of the Almighty, nor His awful holiness, and felt as if his human weakness and unworthiness must perish in so august a presence. "Woe is me," cries he, "surely I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah Sabaoth."³ But while he fears that he will die, a seraph flies towards him to fit him for his great task. The coals⁴ of the altar glow with the holy words of adoration, as with a burning fire. To touch his lips with one consecrates them to the utterances of inspiration, and sets him apart as the prophet-apostle of God. When therefore the mysterious voice of Jehovah now asks who will undertake to speak for Him to Judah, the hitherto trembling spirit of the chosen seer is filled with a holy confidence, and he at once offers to do so.

But he little knows the task before him. In the words

¹ Rev. viii. 4.

² Ewald, *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 181.

³ Isaiah had read or knew of such passages as Gen. xviii. 23 ff. Ex. xxxiii. 20. Judges xiii. 22.

⁴ Wood embers, or charcoal.

that follow, its difficulties are sadly revealed. He will indeed be a prophet to "this people," which God will no longer call *His*; but the result of his life-long work among them will only be to make them more perverse and less open to receive the words he brings.¹ Their foreseen rejection of his message must indeed have this effect; for to thrust away the truth is to destroy religious sensibility and leave less faculty of repentance. "How long, O Lord, shall this blindness and perversity continue"? asks the newly consecrated seer; for prophecy had already foretold a time when Israel would return to its God. But the awful answer comes back from the heavens—It will last till the utter destruction of the Hebrew state; till the land be desolate, and the people carried off to another country by the enemy; whose name is not announced. The purifying fire of affliction will repeatedly consume all but a remnant, but from them a better race, "a holy seed"—the true people of Jehovah,—will arise, as new shoots spring from the stump of a felled terebinth or oak.² The vision now passed away, but Isaiah henceforth felt himself divinely appointed as the prophet of God.

The dates of events in the Assyrian records seem to point to some corruption in the length of Jotham's reign. In 742 they mention Uzziah as being an active member of the Syrian league, and eight years later relate that Ahaz makes his formal submission to the Great King. The sixteen years assigned to Jotham in the Bible³ must hence be much curtailed, unless he be supposed to have reigned for a number of years along with Uzziah, who by his leprosy had been disqualified for the kingly office.

¹ Isa. vi. 9, 10, are five times quoted in the New Test. as realized in Christ's day, when the nation was near its doom.

² Isa. vi. 1-13.

³ 2 Chron. xxvii. 1. 2 Kings xv. 33.

Pekah was king of Samaria and Rezin of Damascus; the two acting in close alliance against Assyria—common danger uniting for the time, even such hereditary enemies. To secure Jotham as a confederate was now their great wish, but, perhaps under Isaiah's advice, he steadily refused. Unable to win him otherwise, the confederates forthwith tried force, and wasted their strength in inroads on Judah which were vigorously repelled.¹ At his death, however, things changed sadly for the worse.

¹ 2 Kings xv. 37.





CHAPTER XI.

AHAZ AND ISAIAH.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

ZACHARIAH,	B.C.	770.
SHALLUM,	„ „	
MENAHEN,	„	769-759.
PEKAHIAH,	■	759-751.
PEKAH,	■	751-728.
HOSEA,	„	728-723.
SAMARIA TAKEN,		722.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

JOTHAM,	B.C.	756-740.
AHAZ,	■	740-724.

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

See page 214.

AHAZ, the son of Jotham, was a young man of twenty when he ascended the throne. His father, shrewd, practical, brave in war, and devout at all times, had left the kingdom strong, rich, and well organized.¹ Long continued prosperity had filled it with silver and gold,² and the army was in the highest efficiency. Its cavalry and chariots were especially famous;³ and a large merchant navy of Tarshish ships, sailing from Elath, could boast their gilded prows and stems, and purple sails, and brought home rich cargoes from the distant East.⁴ The districts east of the Jordan, regained by

¹ 2 Chron. xxvii. 3, 4. Isa. ii. 15.

² Isa. ii. 7.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Isa. ii. 6. The meaning given by Gesenius, Redslob, and Hitzig to the words translated "upon all pleasant pictures," A.V., are incorporated in the text.

Uzziah, were still retained.¹ But though himself true to Jehovah, Jotham had been unable to check the increasing corruption of the age. The prejudice of the people in favour of their ancient high places,² which had now become superstitious where they were not heathen, prevented his destroying them; and intercourse with the various nations round, through trade and extended empire, had gradually "filled the land" with idols.³ With the intellectual culture and the manufactures of Syria and Western Asia, soothsayers had also been introduced; diviners of the clouds from Philistia were common in Jerusalem,⁴ and professors of the black arts abounded.⁵ This unfaithfulness to Jehovah had been visited with heavy judgments, for as such the inroads of Pekah and Rezin were to be regarded.⁶

In Ahaz, "the Grasper," men soon found they had a king in every way the opposite of his father. Of his early training we know nothing, but his tastes show that he must have grown up under the influence of the old heathen court-party; the worshippers of foreign manners, to whom the old simplicity of the land and its hereditary faith were vulgar and provincial, in comparison with the refinement and gorgeous idolatry of Phenicia and Assyria. Under this faction,—the counterpart of the Persian and Macedonian parties of after ages, at Athens,—Ahaz, while an Israelite in blood, showed himself an alien in all other respects. Heathen foreigners were raised by him

¹ 2 Chron. xxvii. 5.

² Prof. J. P. Lesley, in *Man's Origin, etc.*, Boston, 1882, proposes as the derivation of "altar," the two words: al=*the*; tor=*hill*.

³ Isa. ii. 8.

⁴ Isa. ii. 6.

⁵ Isa. iii. 3, translated "eloquent orators," as in the text.

⁶ 2 Kings xv. 37. See p. 232.

to high offices in the state.¹ As early as the days of Solomon, Assyrian culture had gained a footing in Judea, through the Phenician architects and artists employed by the wise king. The House of the Forest of Lebanon had been copied from the great buildings of Nineveh; for its proportions, its cedar roofing, its numerous columns, its windows and doors squared at the top, are in exact correspondence with the Throne Room of an Assyrian Palace. The separation of the various regal edifices into several distinct groups; the large courts inside; their being paved with stone, and the employment of stone slabs to face the palace walls,² are also characteristics of the royal buildings of Nineveh. The overlaying of the temple with pure gold, so marvellous to us, was familiar to Babylonians, Assyrians, and Medes. Its ornamentation; its cherubim,³ palm trees, and open flowers, its pomegranates and lions, were thoroughly Assyrian. The height of the pillars Jachin and Boaz; their size and complicated capitals, have parallels at Persepolis. The lions that guarded the steps of Solomon's throne recall the lion figures at the Assyrian palace gates, and the throne of ivory is illustrated by the fragments of ivory furniture found at Nineveh.⁴

Ahaz, however, went very much further. A man of taste, as it was then understood, he sought to make Jerusalem rival the heathen capitals of the day. Gold and silver idols glittered in every part.⁵ An Assyrian altar, which at a later period he saw at Damascus, struck his fancy, and a copy of it was raised in Jerusalem from drawings sent thither by the king.⁶ It was apparently

¹ *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 115.

² 1 Kings vii. 9.

³ Rawlinson thinks they were probably winged bulls. *Hist. Illust. of Old Test.*, p. 108.

⁴ *Rawlinson*, p. 108.

⁵ Isa. ii. 20; xxx. 22; xxxi. 7.

⁶ 2 Kings xvi. 10.

of hewn stone, three-sided, and sculptured, and thus very different from those of the Hebrews.¹ The morning and evening sacrifice were henceforth offered on this new erection; the brazen altar of Solomon being reserved for special sacrifices by Ahaz in person; for, like the Great King whom he wished to imitate, he affected personally to inquire of the gods when it pleased him.² It was removed, however, from its position of honour in front of the Holy Place, to the north side, and the new altar was set up on the sacred spot thus left free.³ To this innovation the high-priest Uriah,—in contrast to the inflexible spirit of his predecessor under Uzziah,—lent himself, apparently without opposition; nor does he seem to have resisted other changes to which it ultimately led the way. The brazen bulls beneath the great laver were, at a later time, removed, to get the copper for the tribute to Assyria: a stone base being put in their place—the small brazen lavers on wheels, the metal canopy over the royal stand in the temple court, and the brazen ornaments of the royal entrance to the temple, sharing the same fate.

In his passion for everything Assyrian, as if to show his gross servility as well as taste, Ahaz, still further, introduced the whole system of Mesopotamian idolatry. The worship of the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, as followed on the Tigris, was adopted by royal authority in Jerusalem.⁴ Snow-white sacred horses and magnificent chariots, dedicated, as in Assyria, to the sun-god, and used on his festivals,—the opening days of the various seasons,⁵—to go out to greet the sun at his

¹ Rawlinson's *Great Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 273.

² 2 Kings xvi. 15, see v. 12. *Graetz*.

³ 2 Kings xvi. 14.

⁴ 2 Kings xxiii. 5.

⁵ Jewish tradition.

rise, were stalled in some of the chambers originally built for the priests and for the sacred vessels; etc., at the entrance of the temple.¹ For the worship of the planets and of the signs of the zodiac,² in Assyrian fashion, altars were built on the flat top of the palace, and were soon imitated on the roofs of private houses.³ A dial was erected, doubtless after an Assyrian pattern, near the palace, consisting apparently of a flight of graduated steps, to mark the daily progress of the solar shadow; their top serving as a watch-tower from which the movements of the heavens could be observed, for idolatrous purposes, by night.⁴ The courtiers prided themselves on learning the Assyrian language, which was related to the Aramaic or Syrian, and thus easy for Hebrews.⁵ Nor was this passion for copying Nineveh without some advantages. It apparently introduced a better mode of dividing time, and a higher taste in decorating the mansions of the great and in the shapes of furniture and vessels; for in this, as already stated, the Assyrians were the teachers even of the Greeks.⁶ A new style of house architecture also was brought into fashion in Jerusalem.⁷ But the evil which was learned far out-balanced the good.

Altars to heathen gods were planted at the corners of the streets, that incense might be burned on them by the passers by.⁸ An Asherah—the synonym of gross

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 11. Such horses were at times sacrificed to the sun. Keil, *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 40. *Ewald Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 664.

² For "planets," 2 Kings xxiii. 5, Jewish tradition reads "signs of the zodiac."

³ Zeph. i. 5. Jer. xix. 13. *Ewald*, vol. iii. pp. 666-668.

⁴ Isa. xxxviii. 8. *Herod.*, ii. 109.

⁵ 2 Kings xviii. 26.

⁶ Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. i. p. 342.

⁷ Jer. xxii. 14.

⁸ 2 Chron. xxviii. 4.

impurity—was erected in the temple itself.¹ Wretched beings of both sexes, devoted to its foul service, had lodgings in the temple chambers; the women making the cloth, in the sacred courts, for the gaudy tents beneath which its orgies were carried on.² High places dedicated to the evil spirits of the desert³ were erected at the gates of Jerusalem and in other towns and villages.⁴ The worship of foreign gods was everywhere adopted, not only in all existing sanctuaries over the land, but in new ones. The old temples or high places, built by Solomon on the top of the Mount of Olives, for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Moloch, still remained, and were now put once more to their former use.⁵ A new sanctuary to the last of these hateful idols was also added, in the valley of Hinnom, under the walls of Jerusalem, on a spot henceforth known, in contempt, amongst the faithful, as Tophet, “the spitting.” Here, a great brass image of the god was erected, with a furnace within it, a hollow-topped altar beneath its extended arms receiving the children offered to it, when they rolled from them into the flames.⁶ Nor can Ahaz be accused of insincerity in his dreadful superstition, for he gave the best proof of his devotion to it, by sacrificing at least one of his sons to the hideous idol, at some unknown crisis of his life.⁷ The worship of Jehovah was meanwhile more and more neglected, till, towards the close of the reign, the great doors of the temple were at last shut; the sacred lamps left unlighted; no incense offered, and the whole interior left to decay and neglect.⁸ Instead of the

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 6.

² 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

³ Heb. = satyrs.

⁴ 2 Kings xxiii. 8; xvii. 9.

⁵ 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

⁶ See vol. iii. p. 366.

⁷ 2 Kings xvi. 3. 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.

⁸ 2 Kings xvi. 17, 18. 2 Chron. xxviii. 24; xxix. 3, 7, 16, 17.

white-robed priests of the national faith, crowds of those of the heathen gods, clad in black gowns, thronged the streets and roads.¹

It was soon felt by the neighbouring States that the strong hand which had guarded Judah was gone. Pekah and Rezin, no longer timid, boldly invaded the country and wasted it to the very gates of Jerusalem.² The army which had done so much under Uzziah and Jotham was shamefully defeated, and vast numbers of men, women, and children carried off as slaves to Damascus and Samaria, with an enormous booty. But a fraternal feeling still lingered in the bosoms of the northern tribes, and a prophet, otherwise unknown, used it skilfully on behalf of the captives. Pleading for them as of the same race, and impressing on the people of Samaria their guilt in thus enslaving their brethren, he succeeded in securing their peaceful restoration to Judah.³

But misfortunes soon accumulated. Elath on the Red Sea was taken by Rezin,⁴ and the one port of Judah thus lost. Edom, long a vassal, regained its independence, and took numbers of Jews captive. The Philistines rose and won back the towns of the Maritime Plain which Uzziah and Jotham had held. In the striking words of Chronicles, "Jehovah brought Judah low, because of Ahaz; for he had caused licentiousness in Judah, and trespassed sore against Jehovah."⁵

In the midst of such disasters and so much public

The closing of the temple gates and the extinction of the lamps is still kept as a fast on the 18th Ab—the end of July or the beginning of August.

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 5. "Black-robed," Heb. See Chamar: *Mühlau und Volck*.

² See p. 232.

³ 2 Kings xvi. 5. 2 Chron. xxviii. 5–15.

⁴ 2 Kings xvi. 6.

⁵ 2 Chron. xxviii. 17–19. *Gesenius*.

corruption, the tongue of Isaiah could not be silent. How often he addressed the people we have no means of knowing, but one great discourse, delivered some time before the capture of Elath, has been preserved.¹

Beginning by what seems to be a quotation from some older but unknown prophet, from whom Micah also, at a later time, borrowed the same passage more fully,² he prepared his hearers for the terrible judgments he was presently to foretell, by repeating an earlier promise of a glorious future, if they returned to the worship of God.³

"You know," said he, if we may amplify his words, "how it has been prophesied that 'it shall come to pass in future days that the mountain of the House of Jehovah shall be made the highest in honour, of all mountains, and be raised in fame above the hills, and all nations shall stream to it.' And how they will set out and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the House of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.' For out of Zion instruction in His law shall flow forth like a perennial stream, and His word flood abroad from Jerusalem. From its sacred heights He shall judge between the nations, and give His decisions to many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

"But these glorious promises depend for their fulfilment on yourselves. Up, then, O House of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah! Yet, alas! O Jehovah, Thou hast, for the time, cast off Thy people, the House of Jacob, for their sins! For they have adopted the evil customs and ways of the East; they are diviners of the clouds like the Philistines, and are full of the

¹ Isa. ii.-v.

² Isa. ii. 2-4. Micah iv. 1-4.

³ The authorities for the translations from Isaiah in the text are Delitzsch, Naegelsbach, Eichhorn, Hitzig, Cheyne, Gesenius, and Bunsen. The dates assigned to the prophecies, it may be said, vary with each translator to the most confusing extent. I have adopted those of Mr. Cheyne as the latest student of Isaiah.

sons of the alien. Their land is filled with silver and gold; there is no end of their wealth. It abounds with horses and chariots without number. It is full of idol gods. The people worship the work of their hands; that which their own fingers have made. Thus do the poor lower themselves, and the rich degrade themselves, so that they are unworthy to approach Thee or be Thy people, O Jehovah! They have brought on them Thy wrath and Thou canst not forgive them!

"Flee, therefore, ye people, into the rocks, and hide yourselves in the dust, from the terrors of Jehovah, and from the greatness of His majesty! For the pride of the great will be humbled, and the haughtiness of the people brought low, and Jehovah alone will be exalted in the day when He comes to judgment.

"For Jehovah of Hosts has, indeed, fixed a day to judge and bring low all that is proud and high; all that is now in honour; to bring low all that is high and lofty on earth; for nothing is too exalted for Him in His day of wrath. The storm of His fury shall burst upon all the cedars of Lebanon, now so proud; all the oaks of Bashan, now so strong; all the lofty mountains and high hills; all the lofty towers and high fortress walls; on the great Tarshish ships and their rich cargoes.¹ Verily, the pride of man shall be humbled, and the loftiness of mortals be abased, and Jehovah alone exalted in that day.

"In that day the idols,—those no-gods,—shall utterly vanish. And men shall flee into the caverns of the rocks and pits of the earth, to escape from the terrors of Jehovah and from the greatness of His majesty, when He rises from His throne and the earth trembles before Him.

"In that day every one will throw his idols of silver and his idols of gold which he made to worship, into any dark corner, where the unclean mole and bat may creep over and nestle among them, and will himself flee to the clefts of the rocks and the fissures of the lofty crags, from before the terrors of Jehovah and the greatness of His majesty, when He rises from His throne, and the earth trembles before Him.

¹ Ewald has for this, "high obelisks"; Noyes has, "and all that is delightful to the eye"; Eichhorn has, "all splendid monuments." The imagery as a whole is designed to paint the impending ruin of the rich and great of the land.

"Cease¹ ye then from confidence in the strength or wisdom of man, whose life is only the breath of his nostrils! How little help can be had from ■ being so weak?² For, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, already takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah every stay and support; all on whom its bread and its water depend;³ hero and warrior, judge and prophet, soothsayer and elder, the captain of fifty and the man of position, the counsellor, the skilled artificer,⁴ and the skilled enchanter. And, hereafter, says He, I will make youths their princes and with childish waywardness shall they rule over them.⁵ Lawlessness and misery will get the upper hand. The people will oppress one another; man against man, neighbour against neighbour. The lad will turn fiercely on the old man; the common man on the noble. Anarchy will reign. Amidst ceaseless internal strife, oppression, and violence, the worst men will rise to momentary power. And if ■ well meaning man take hold of his brother, in his father's house, saying, 'You have a coat! Be our ruler; take the wreck of the kingdom under your charge'—he will lift up his voice and say, 'I will not be the healer of the land, for I have neither bread nor clothing in my house. Ye shall not set me to be ruler of the people!'

"Alas! Jerusalem is sunk into ruin and Judah is fallen; for both their words and deeds are against Jehovah, to provoke the eyes of His majesty. Their brazen, unfeeling⁶ looks witness against them; they boast of their sins, without shame, like Sodom. Woe to their souls, for they have done themselves evil! 'Tell the righteous,' says Jehovah, 'that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds.' But woe to the wicked, for what his hands have earned shall be given him!' As for My people, a child is their ruler; women lord it over

¹ Isaiah iii. 1 ff.

² This verse is omitted in the *Sept.*

³ God is about to lead them all into exile, and has already cut down many of them. Ewald and others retain this last clause; Cheyne and Hitzig think it a gloss.

⁴ *Eichhorn. Cheyne.*

⁵ Ahaz was twenty when he became king; Manasseh was twelve.

⁶ *Eichhorn. Ewald.*

them.¹ My people, your leaders lead you astray and have broken up the path in which you should go!

“For this cause Jehovah will shortly visit you in wrath; He stands up to try the nations. He will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and with its princes,—accusing them thus: ‘So, then, ye have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses! What mean ye by treading down My people, and grinding the faces of the wretched?’ saith Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts.”

The prophet has denounced the sins of the men; he now turns to those of the women.

“Thus, also, saith Jehovah, Because the daughters of Zion are proud, and walk with neck thrown back, and cast their eyes about, and mince their steps, to set their anklets tinkling as they go: for this, the Lord will make their heads bald,² and give them over to be dishonoured by the enemy.³ In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their anklets;⁴ the golden disks and crescents hung on their hair, their foreheads, and their necks;⁵ the ear-rings, the arm-chains, and the fine veils; the coronets, the stepping-chains,⁶ and the costly girdles; the scent-bottles and the amulets; the finger and nose-rings; the gala dresses and the costly mantles; the cloaks and the purses; the hand mirrors and the fine linen underclothes; the turbans and

¹ A young prince under the power of his harem, as often happens in the East.

² Smite them with a scab.

³ Delitzsch (in effect).

⁴ Rings of gold and silver, often hollow, to increase the sound, and at times hung with small bells, are still worn round the ankles in Egypt and the East; the tinkling they make being thought an attraction. *Lane and Kitto*.

⁵ Very small ornaments of gold tied on silken threads are still worn in the hair in Egypt. Numerous braids fall over the shoulders, and the threads, resplendent with the spangles, are intermixed with these. *Lane*. Disks, etc., were also, apparently, hung on the forehead and neck.

⁶ In use yet in the East. *Delitzsch*. To make the wearers take short steps.

the large veils. In that day, instead of perfume there will be rottenness; instead of a costly girdle, a rope; instead of finely-dressed locks, baldness; instead of a wide mantle, only sackling wrapped round them; and instead of beauty, your captor's mark branded on your brow. Your men, O Zion, will fall by the sword; your mighty men in battle; and the gates of Zion shall sigh and wail, and she will sit, desolate, on the earth. And¹ seven women will lay hold in that day on one man, saying, 'We shall eat our own bread and wear our own clothing:'² only let us be called by thy name and be thought your wives, to take away the shame of being unmarried and childless."

But the people of God cannot perish for ever. The prophet has proclaimed the terrors of judgment; he must relieve the picture by once more reminding them of the glorious promises of the future.

"In that day the Branch of Jehovah, the Messianic King,³ shall be for an ornament and glory; and the fruit of the land a pride and adornment for the remnant of Israel; and he who is left in Zion, and remains in Jerusalem shall be called holy; all, I mean, enrolled among the living in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the defilement of the daughters of Zion, and cleansed the blood-guiltiness of Jerusalem by the storm of judgment and of fire. Then will Jehovah create on the whole of Mount Zion, and upon her festal assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke, with the brightness of a flaming fire, by night, for over all her glory shall be a radiant cloud of divine protection,⁴ and this canopy shall be a pavilion, for shade from the heat by day, and for a shelter from storm and from rain."

The prophet now once more varies his address.

"Come, I will sing of Jehovah, my Beloved; I will sing a song

¹ Isaiah iv. 1 ff.

² Exod. xxi. 10. The husband was bound to give a second wife her "food and raiment," etc., no less than the first.

³ *Delitzsch*.

⁴ "A nimbus that keeps off the world from her (Zion)." Ewald, p. 195, *Propheten*. Perhaps a reference to the wilderness life.

of my Beloved about Judah, His vineyard. My Beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful slope.¹ And He dug it well, cleared it of stones, planted it with choice vines, built a tower in its midst, to guard it, and hewed out a wine vat. Then He waited till it should yield Him grapes; but, behold, only wild grapes came!

"Now, then, ye dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard! What is there still to be done to My vineyard, that I have not done to it? Why, when I hoped it should yield grapes, has it only brought forth wild grapes? Come, then, and I will tell you what I will do with My vineyard. I will take away its hedge, that it may be eaten down; I will break down its wall, that it may be trodden under foot! I will make a clean end of it; it will neither be pruned nor hoed, but will grow over with thorns and thistles. I will also command the clouds that they do not rain on it. For the vineyard of Jehovah Sabaoth is the House of Israel; the men of Judah are His loved plantation. And He hoped for deeds of good, but, behold, there are only deeds of blood; for righteousness, and, lo, there is only the cry of the oppressed!"

Now follows, in detail, a denunciation of the evil fruits the vineyard has brought forth.

"WOE to them who join house to house, and field to field, till there is no more room, and they dwell alone in the depopulated land. In my ears has Jehovah Sabaoth spoken concerning them. Believe me, many grand houses shall become a desolation; great and fair, they shall be without an inhabitant! For ten yoke of vineyard land² will bear only a bath,³ and a homer⁴ full of seed will yield only a tenth as much!

"WOE to them who rise early in the morning, to run after strong drink; who sit late in the evening twilight till they are heated with wine! The lute and cymbal, the timbrel and flute, and wine, are their delight, but they pay no regard to the work of Jehovah, and never think what His hand is doing in our midst!

¹ "On ■ horn, the son of fatness," *Heb.*

² A yoke = as much as a yoke of oxen plough in a day.

³ About seven gallons.

⁴ About thirty-two pecks.

Living blindly, thus, My people will go into exile before they know it, and their rich men become hungry starvelings, and the noisy crowd burn with thirst. Therefore Sheol—the underworld—will open wide its mouth and gape its jaws beyond measure, and swallow down the glory of Jerusalem, and its drunken tumult, and its revelry, and the crowd of its merry-makers. Thus shall the mean man be abased, and the high be brought low, and proud eyes be humbled. But Jehovah Sabaoth will be exalted by His judgments on them—the holy God will show Himself holy through righteousness. And the flocks of the Arabs shall graze on their broad meadows, and wandering shepherds roam over the waste estates of the rich.¹

“WOE to them who are yoked to iniquity like oxen to a cart, and drag it after them as if with cords of ungodliness, and their sin as with cart-ropes; that say, ‘Let Jehovah hasten; let Him hurry on His work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come on and draw near, that we may know it.’

“WOE to them who call evil good, and good evil; who call darkness light, and light darkness; who call bitter sweet, and sweet bitter! Woe to them who are wise in their own eyes; and knowing in their own esteem!



ASSYRIAN STANDARDS.

“WOE to them that are mighty to drink wine; great men to mingle strong drink; who clear the guilty for a bribe and take the rights of worthy men from them! As the tongue of the fire licks up stubble; as hay sinks down into the flame; their root shall be rottenness and their blossom fly off like dust; for they have despised the Law of Jehovah Sabaoth and contemned the word of the Holy One of Israel!

“On account of all this, the wrath of Jehovah is kindled against His people, and He shall stretch out His hand over them and smite them, till the mountains tremble, and men’s carcasses lie as offal in the streets. Yet, for all this His wrath is not appeased, but His hand is stretched out still! He lifts up a banner to call

¹ This seems the sense of the verse.

the heathen from afar,¹ and hisseth to them from the ends of the earth, as a bee-master hisseth to gather his swarm, and lo ! they come with swift haste ! None among them is weary or stumbles ; they spare no time for slumber or sleep ; the belt of their waist is never loosed, the thong of their shoes never breaks ! Their arrow heads are sharpened, their bows bent ; the hoofs of their horses are like flint ;² their chariot wheels rush on like a whirlwind. Their roar is like the roar of a lioness ; they roar like young lions and growl hoarsely, and seize their prey and carry it off, and no one can rescue it. And they shall roar against Judah in that day like the roaring of the sea, and when men look over the earth there will be thick darkness and sorrow ; the light will be veiled by the darkening clouds !”

This magnificent oration was lost on the weak Ahaz. His terror at the invasion of Pekah and Rezin, and at the attacks of Edom and the Philistines, had spread, moreover, to the people, till their “ hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.”³ The king, as a last hope, contemplated calling in Assyrian aid, and thus bringing to his very doors the dreaded enemy whom his father and grandfather had valiantly kept at a distance. In this critical conjuncture Isaiah once more came forward. Prudence, calmness, and trust in Jehovah were above all things necessary for Ahaz. He must do nothing rashly. Reflection would show that foes already so weak, and now threatened by Tiglath-pileser,⁴ could not succeed, if met courageously, and the prophet, besides, knew, from Divine assurance, that Jehovah would overthrow any attempts against Jerusalem and the

¹ The Assyrians.

² Horses were not shod in antiquity. The hardness of the hoof was therefore of vital importance. Hence Homer’s “ brazen-footed horses.” A horse’s hoof, I am informed by a competent authority, grows very hard when it has never been shod.

³ Isaiah vii. 2.

⁴ The same as Pul. This is to be kept in mind.

House of David. The city was still safe from capture by a sudden attack; indeed, the watchful confidence of Isaiah and his friends guaranteed this.

Resolved to urge his convictions on Ahaz, in the hopes of deterring him from his meditated action, which he knew would be ruinous, Isaiah went out with his son, who bore the symbolic name of Shear-Jashub—"a remnant shall return" (to Jehovah)—to meet the king, who was apparently accustomed to drive out along the Joppa road on the west side of Zion, past the "upper pool," now the Birket Mamilla. An aqueduct from this ran east towards the town, and close to the end of this, where it leaves the pool, was a field, then, as now, used by the citizens, on account of its nearness to the water, as a washing and bleaching ground,¹ and by the fullers for felting and cleansing their newly-woven woollen cloths. Here, outside the walls, the prophet, as he expected, encountered Ahaz, and having stopped his chariot, proceeded to deliver to him his Divine commission.

"Take heed,"² said he, "that you keep calm. Do not fear or be faint-hearted on account of these two fag ends of smoking fire-brands; for the rage of Rezin and Syria, or of the king of Samaria,

¹ *Delitzsch*, p. 125. Furrer (*Bib. Lex.* vol. v. p. 468) thinks this conduit was the one which was discovered within the last few years running underground from north to south, below the present north gate, and emptying itself into a huge subterranean double reservoir or pool close to the ancient fortress Antonia. It was the spring of this, Furrer supposes, that Hezekiah stopped, or hid. It has not yet been discovered outside the gates. The "fuller's field," he and Menke (*Bib. Atlas*, pl. VI.) place on the north-east of the city, not on the west. Dr. Young also thinks it was on the north. *Dict. of Bible*, vol. i. p. 636. In the text I have adopted Delitzsch's view, as we know of a pool in that case, but not in the other.

² Isaiah vii.

that son of Remaliah, a low-born man. Have no fear though Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have planned evil against you, saying, 'Let us go up against Judah and distress it, and force the passes, and conquer it for ourselves, and put the son of Tabeal—a Syrian—as king in Jerusalem.' You may be perfectly at ease, for thus saith the Lord Jehovah: 'The scheme shall neither stand, nor succeed. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken as a nation.¹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria, Remaliah's son.' If you and Judah have no faith in Jehovah your kingdom shall not continue, any more than that of Ephraim."

To this dignified counsel Ahaz seems to have given no reply; at least, none is recorded. He had a secret in his breast which he dared not divulge to Isaiah. The invisible help of Jehovah, and the distant fate of Ephraim, were of no moment to him. He had determined to call in the aid of Assyria. But the grace of God would not cast off as yet even such an unworthy son of David.

"If you wish a sign that I speak for Jehovah," resumed the prophet, therefore, urged by a Divine impulse, "ask one from Him; He is your God. Ask it to be given from the underworld of Sheol or from the heavens above." But Ahaz, affecting a humility he rarely showed in his daily life, declined the invitation: "He would not ask, nor put Jehovah thus to the test." Isaiah was thus

¹ This is a very remarkable passage. Even after its fall in 722, Samaria was quite a respectable power, with which Assyria had to reckon. It is last mentioned as a kingdom in the Assyrian records of the year B.C. 673. Soon after this, an Assyrian prefect of Samaria had taken the place of the now suppressed kings. Counting 65 years, from 734 or 736, when Isaiah met Ahaz, we are brought to 671 or 673, which may well have been the very year when Samaria finally ceased to be a people. See *Delitzsch*, p. 129. *Cheyne*, vol. i. p. 44. *Smith's Assurbanipal*, p. 36.

left to continue the conference. He no longer, however, addressed Ahaz individually, but through him, the collective royal family, who in their different branches, as in Egypt, were a very numerous and powerful¹ body, and engrossed the high offices of the State, especially the judicial functions.² Turning to those in the royal escort, he thus began :

“Hear, I pray you, ye House of David!³ Is it too small a matter for you to weary me, a man, by paying no heed to my words; will you also weary my God by refusing to believe without seeing, and when a sign is offered you, refusing to accept it? Yet Jehovah Himself, in pity, will give you a sign, unasked. ‘Behold the Virgin⁴ is with child and will bear a son, and will call his name Immanuel. When he is old enough to choose between evil and good he shall have only curdled milk and honey⁵ to eat. For before he knows either evil or good, the land of both the kings of whom you are in such mortal terror shall be laid waste. Still more, Jehovah will bring on thee and on thy people, and on thy father’s House, for thy alliance with Assyria in place of trusting in God, days such as have not come since the time

¹ *Delitzsch*, p. 130. *Cheyne*, vol. i. p. 46.

² Jer. xxi. 11, 12.

³ Isa. v. 13 ff.

⁴ “The Virgin.” *Delitzsch*. *Ewald*. *Key*. *Louth*. *Sept*. *Pesh*. *Vulgate*. “The damsel.” *Naegelsbach*. *Hitzig*. *Noyes*. “The young woman.” *Cheyne*. The arguments for and against the Messianic import of this sign are given in *Cheyne*. I agree with him in regarding it as Messianic. See *Cheyne*, vol. i. pp. 47, 48. The discussion in *Delitzsch* is the best and fullest from the accepted orthodox point of view, which I think the right one.

⁵ The only food left in the land. See ver. 22. The age meant depends on the sense of “knowing evil from good.” A child when a few years old knows right from wrong, but the full strength of intelligent moral convictions is rather the characteristic of opening manhood. The latter would cover the dates of the destruction of Damascus and Samaria, which might well have as an indirect result, the desolation of many parts of the southern kingdom by the presence of a corps of the invaders.

when Ephraim broke away from Judah. He shall bring against thee the king of Assyria whose help you seek! And it shall come to pass on that day that Jehovah will hiss, like a bee-master to his swarm,¹ for the flies at the end of the Nile arms of Egypt, and to the bees in the land of Assyria,² and they will come, all of them, and settle in the steeply walled mountain villages, and in the clefts of the rocks, and in all the thorn bushes, and in all the pastures. In that day Jehovah shall shave with a razor, that is to be hired on the border lands of the Great River—the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet of Judah, and sweep away even the beard.³ And so utterly shall the land be wasted in that day that a man's herd and flock will be no more than a young cow—the strong grown cows having been carried off by the enemy—and two ewes; and so desolate shall it be; so grown everywhere into pasture; that the curdled milk of these will be his staple food. All, indeed, who are left in the country, then one great lonely grazing field, shall have only this and the honey of the swarming multitudes of wild bees to sustain them. Bread and wine they will not have; only thick milk and honey, without change. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place where magnificent vineyards grew, worth each year a thousand shekels, will be overgrown with thorns and briars. And so rank and solitary will these be, that men will only venture, on account of the wild beasts lurking in them, to go among them armed with arrows and the bow, for all the land will be given up to thorns and briars. And as to the hills, once hoed and worked so carefully, the peasant will not go on them for fear of the thorns and briars.⁴ Oxen will be let

¹ In the East swarms of bees are made to settle by a hissing sound from the bee-master. They fly towards it and alight on some branch close by. See p. 306.

² Egypt is the land of flies—its moist soil favouring insect life. Assyria, with its hills and woods, was famous for its bees. *Delitzsch*.

³ The "hired razor" was Pul. But though hired directly by Ahab, he was an unconscious instrument in the hands of Jehovah. To shave off the beard and hair of the head, was the greatest possible humiliation, and is here used as a symbol of this.

⁴ *Delitzsch*, and others.

loose on them, and they will be left for sheep and goats to tread and eat down."

The mysterious sign of the birth of Immanuel, with its near and far distant significance, embracing the speedy ruin of Syria and Israel, and the visitation of Judah herself by the Assyrians, but also looking into the remote future when the true Messiah—"God with us"—in the highest sense, should appear, did not, however, exhaust the patient tenderness of God to His people. Unwilling to cast them off, other signs were added, which Isaiah thus records :

"Then Jehovah said to me,¹ 'Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters,² so that all may be able to read it: "This is inscribed to one to be called 'Speedy plunder, early spoil,'" and take for Me as trustworthy witnesses, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah.' And I went to the prophetess and she conceived and bare a son. Then said Jehovah to me, 'Call his name "Speedy plunder, early spoil;"³ for before the boy will know enough to cry 'Father' or 'Mother,' the wealth of Damascus⁴ and the spoil of Samaria will be carried off by the armies of the king of Assyria.'

"And Jehovah proceeded to speak further to me, as follows : 'Because Israel—the northern people—despises the still flowing waters of Siloah⁵—that is, rejects dependence on Jehovah, of whose favour these waters are an emblem—and rejoices to ally itself with Rezin and with Pekah the son of Remaliah; therefore,

¹ Isa. viii. 1 ff.

² Ewald. Delitzsch.

³ Such complex religious names were not uncommon among the Hebrews. Thus : Jushab-hesed, "Love is returned," 1 Chron. iii. 20; Hazelelponi, "(God) is the present protection," 1 Chron. iv. 3; Romamti-ezer, "I have praised the help," 1 Chron. xxv. 4. The names of many of the Assyrian kings are also of this kind.

⁴ Damascus fell in 732. The eastern provinces of Samaria were plundered two years earlier.

⁵ The brook under the walls of Jerusalem is used as a symbol of the city and temple.

behold! the Lord will bring on them the flood of the great and mighty river;¹—that is, the king of Assyria and all his forces;—and it shall swell over all its channels, and overflow all its banks, and sweep on through Israel and Syria, even to Judah, flooding and streaming on till it reaches the necks of men, and the spreading out of its waters shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.’²

“Put forth your rage O ye Syrians and people of Israel; ye shall soon be dismayed! Mark it, all ye far off places of the earth! Gird yourselves, ye foes—Damascus and Samaria. Ye shall soon be in dismay! Make your plans to take Jerusalem itself, after overrunning the land; they will come to nothing. Give the command; it shall not be carried through, for ‘God is with us.’³

“For thus has Jehovah spoken to me, laying His hand mightily on me, and warning me not to go in the way of this people. ‘Ye shall not dignify what this people call a “league” or “plot” against Me and the House of David, with that name; nor shall ye fear Syria and Samaria, the objects of their terror, nor let them be your dread. Honour Jehovah Sabaoth alone, as the Holy One; let Him alone be your fear and your dread. In that case He will be a refuge for you—and show Himself holy by protecting you. But to both the Houses of Israel, who have rejected Him, He will be a stone to strike against and a rock for stumbling; to the inhabitants of Jerusalem a gin and a net. Many among them shall stumble at it and fall, and be broken and snared, and taken!’⁴ I, Jehovah, will show Myself One in opposing whom man rushes to his own ruin!

“‘Bind up the roll on which you have written My words; seal up My sayings, and give them to My faithful ones, such as Uriah

¹ Euphrates.

² Assyria flooded and destroyed Syria and Israel entirely. Judah was invaded, but Jerusalem, like its head, rose above the waters, and the land was saved in the end, for a time. Isaiah thinks of “Immanuel” (chapter vii. 14) as a pledge of this deliverance. “God is with” Judah.

³ News of the approach of the Assyrians reached the Syrians and Israelites when they were besieging Jerusalem.

⁴ In the Assyrian invasions.

and Zechariah,¹ to be kept as a witness of My truth when the evil days come.'

"As for me," continues the prophet, speaking for himself, "I wait in firm hope on Jehovah, the Help and Deliverer. He hides His face now from the House of Jacob, but He will lift on it the light of His countenance once more, ere long. In Him shall I hope. Behold I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are pledges and signs from Jehovah Sabaoth, who dwells on Mount Zion. Our very names, given us by Him,² are unfailing promises. Mine is 'the salvation of God'; those of my children are 'A remnant shall return,' 'God with us,' and 'Speedy plunder, early spoil.' When, therefore, they say to you, whoever you be, 'Ask at the consulters of the dead, and at the wizards that chirp and mutter their spells,' give them this answer: 'Should not a people enquire at their own God? What folly to seek the living Jehovah by consulting the shades of dead men—to seek guidance for living men from ghosts! Shall a people which, like Judah, has for its God the living Jehovah, turn from Him to consult dead idols?'³ Instead of this, let your watchword be: 'To the teaching and testimony'; go to them, not to idols or sorcerers; go to the prophets, the spokesmen for God. If men will not accept this word, no dawn of hope is before them."⁴

"In the evil days when they are driven from their homes they will wander through the land, hard pressed and hungry; and when thus famished, they shall murmur bitterly in their hearts and curse their king and their God."⁵ And whether they look up to the heavens, or over the land, behold, there will be only sorrow and gloom; distress and darkness around; distress and darkness in their own souls!

"But this remnant of the people, saved by God for Himself, shall not be thus in misery for ever."⁶ For it will not always be dark with them, though thick gloom hangs over them now. In years lately past Jehovah brought sorrow to Zebulon and Naphthali, by the invasion of the Assyrians. But hereafter He will bring

¹ Isa. viii. 2.

² Isa. viii. 3.

³ The senses of various versions are incorporated in the text.

⁴ *Delitzsch*.

⁵ *Delitzsch* understands Jehovah; *Hitzig*, the idol gods.

⁶ Isa. ix. 1.

them to honour throughout the regions on the way to the sea—Naphtali,—the west side of the Lake of Galilee, the country beyond Jordan, and the half-heathen district of Kabul or Galilee far north, on the waters of Huleh,¹ from which the inhabitants have been so recently carried off into captivity. The people that walked in darkness see a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, on them has light shone. Thou, O Jehovah, hast multiplied the nation once more: Thou hast prepared for it great joy. They rejoice before Thee like the joy of a harvest-home,² or as the warrior when he divides the spoil. For Thou hast broken their grievous yoke, and the stick of their taskmasters, with which their shoulder was beaten, as in the day of Gideon's great triumph over Midian! For all the harness of the soldier noisily girding himself for battle,³ and the war-cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, and fuel for the fire. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall rest upon His shoulder, and His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.⁴ Of the greatness of His rule and of its prosperity there is no end, on the throne of David and over his empire, to establish and to uphold it, by justice and righteousness, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah Sabaoth, on behalf of the people whom He loves, 'will perform this.'"

Thus alternately denouncing the sins of his own people, predicting their impending judgment by God; encouraging them to reliance on Him as their surest dependence even politically; foretelling the defeat of their enemies, and the final glory of the remnant who should survive the impending national calamities, Isaiah

¹ Pul carried off the Israelites from these regions, B.C. 734. See p. 233.

² In Neil's *Pal. Explored*, p. 106, a harvest home is described.

³ Delitzsch has "for the war shoes (boots) of the soldier rushing to the noise of battle," etc. I prefer the translation of Gesenius and Hitzig, which is given.

⁴ Delitzsch sees in this great prophecy of the Messiah, our Lord, the child Immanuel of chap. vii. Even Hitzig translates the words "Mighty God" as we do, "starker Gott."

must have been a great power in the State. But his majestic eloquence and the Divine authority with which he spoke had no influence on Ahaz and his court. An alliance with the king of Assyria was concluded, and a gift far greater than the country could afford, was gathered together and sent him, to secure his active help. The silver and gold in the temple treasury, and even the sacred vessels and all the money in the royal exchequer, hardly sufficed.¹ Meanwhile, Isaiah was unceasing in his activity. Day by day, apparently, he sought to influence Jerusalem for good; warning or cheering the citizens by Divine promises, if, only, they returned heartily to Jehovah. The approaching ruin of Israel for its wickedness and its hostility to Judah could not in such a time be overlooked. A fragment of one address on this great topic is still extant.

“Jehovah,”² says the prophet, “has sent a word to Jacob; it has descended on Israel, and the whole people—Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—will soon realize its power, in spite of their arrogance and pride. Past judgments have not humbled them; those to come will do so. ‘Our brick houses,’³ say they, ‘have fallen down, but we shall build with squared stones; the common sycamore trees have been hewn down, we shall use cedar⁴ in their stead.’ But Jehovah has raised up the princes⁵ of Rezin⁶ against them, and stirred up other enemies. Syria

¹ 2 Kings xvi. 8. 2 Chron. xxviii. 24. ² Isa. ix. 8-x. 4.

³ Sun-dried bricks were probably used then, as now, in building the houses of Palestine.

⁴ Bought at a great price from the Phenicians who held the cedar forests of Lebanon.

⁵ Lit. “oppressors.”

⁶ Delitzsch refers this to the Assyrians. Knobel renders it “the vassal princes of Rezin.” No attack of Philistia on Israel is recorded, but both Syria and Philistia, as Assyrian tributaries, would be required to send auxiliaries to the army of the Great King.

on the east, Philistia on the west, devour Israel with open mouth. But yet he has not repented, and, therefore, notwithstanding all this, God's anger is not turned away from Him, but His hand is stretched out still!

"But the people do not turn to Him that smites them, nor do they seek Jehovah of Hosts. Therefore Jehovah will cut off from Israel, head and tail, the palm-branch and the rush, in one day. The Elder and the dignitary, he is the head, and the false prophets who teach lies they are the tail.¹ The leaders of this people have become false guides, and those they guide are led to misfortune and ruin. Therefore the Lord has not spared² their youth who go forth to war, and has not pitied their orphans and widows, for they are all evil and reprobate, and every mouth speaks ungodliness. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

"For wickedness flames up like fire (in outbursts of civil war and anarchy)³; it burns up the worthless thorns and thistles,⁴ and catches in the thickets of the forest, spreading wider and wider, and rises in whirling smoke. Through the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts the land is burnt up, and the people become fuel for the fire; no man spares his brother. One snatches up what he can on the right hand and still is hungry; and eats on the left and has not enough; he will even eat the flesh of his own arm in his starving madness.⁵ Manasseh shall fight against Ephraim; Ephraim against Manasseh; the two together against Judah. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!

¹ These words are omitted, as an interpolation, by Gesenius, Cheyne, Hitzig, Diestel, Ewald, Knobel and Kneucker. Naegelsbach and others defend them as pointing, with "the elders and dignitaries," to the second class of leaders in Israel.

² *Knobel. Lagarde.*

³ After Pekah's death; from 739 to 731. *Hitzig.*

⁴ The ungodly.

⁵ A picture of general misery, or perhaps of intestine feuds in which the people destroy each other to the uttermost. The tribes loosened from their union by repeated revolutions, reverted more and more to their old isolation and opposition after the violent accession of Pekah.

"Woe to them that draw up unjust decisions; who inscribe oppressive ordinances on the public tablets,¹ to keep the poor from getting justice; to rob the poor of My people of their legal rights, that they may prey on the widow and spoil the orphan! What will ye do in the day of visitation and in the storm of ruin that comes from afar? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will you store your wealth to keep it safe? Nothing will be left but to crouch among the captives, or lie dead among the slain. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!"²

But if Israel were thus sternly denounced before the listening multitudes of Jerusalem, their other foes from Damascus, now wasting the land, were not spared. Against them all the great prophet lifted up his voice in a special "burden."³

"Damascus, said he,⁴ shall perish from the number of cities, and become a tumbled heap of ruins!⁵ The towns of Aroer⁶—the East Jordan country—shall be forsaken. They shall be feeding places for flocks which shall lie down in them; no man remaining to make them afraid. The fortress⁷ will be destroyed from Ephraim and the kingdom from Damascus, and it will be with the remnant of Syria that survives, as with the doomed glory of the children of Israel, says Jehovah Sabaoth. For it will come to pass in that day that the glory of Jacob will be humbled and the fatness of his flesh become lean.⁸ For the enemy shall be

¹ Perhaps alluding to their being written on tablets, as a kind of publication. So Knobel and Diestel. In this case, a curious light is thrown on the culture of the northern kingdom.

² Isa. ix. 8—x. 4. ³ Lit. *lifting up*. Prov. xxx. 1 = *prophecy*.

⁴ Isa. xvii. 1-11.

⁵ This does not preclude its being gradually rebuilt, as indeed it was. The chapter must have been written before 733.

⁶ There was one Aroer in Reuben, on the Arnon; another, in Gad, near Rabbath Ammon. Aroer means "the naked," "the laid bare."

⁷ Samaria.

⁸ Many will be killed or carried off by the enemy, and the remnant reduced to misery in the desolated land.

like a reaper who gathers together the stalks of the standing corn and cuts off the ears; or like one who reaps the thick growing ears in the rich Valley of the Giants, close by Jerusalem.¹ Yet a gleanings will be left as at the shaking down of the olive berries; ² two or three berries on the uppermost bough; four or five that could not be reached, in the thick branches, says Jehovah, the God of Israel.

"In that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes will be lifted to the Holy One of Israel. And He will not look to the altars—the work of his hands—the altars before the sacred calves; nor will he have respect to the Asherah³ or Baal images which his own fingers have made. In that day will the fortified cities of Ephraim be like the mouldering ruins of the old Canaanite towns in the depths of the woods, or on the tops of the hills; the ruins of the towns deserted at the Conquest, in terror of the advancing hosts of Joshua; and the land shall be waste. For thou, Israel, hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy stronghold—thy protecting Rock-fortress, Jehovah! Therefore didst thou lay out thy soil for the plants thou lovest—the lewd gardens of thy idols—and set in it the vines of the alien⁴; and put a hedge round it, and ere long brought thy sowing to flower. But the harvest will be lost in the day of thy grief and desperate sorrow."⁵

These gloomy prophecies were speedily fulfilled. Rejoiced to receive the homage of the grandson of the great Uzziah who had opposed him so stoutly, and eager to crush Damascus and Israel, now weakened more than ever by their invasion of Judah, Pul hastened to the

¹ See Furrer's account of its fertility. *Palästina*, p. 184.

² Gathered by beating the branches. They are harvested while still unripe, as the oil thus got from them is finer.

³ Asherah=goddess of fertility. So called by the Hebrew women, in the belief that she secured their having children. *Diestel*, p. 148. The words "Baal images" are lit. "sun gods," and embrace the sun, the moon, and the hosts of heaven. Deut. iv. 19; xvii. 3. Jer. viii. 2. Ewald translates the words, "idol groves and sun-pillars."

⁴ Gave thyself up to foreign gods.

⁵ *Ewald*.

rescue of Ahaz. It was a great matter to have him thus dependent, as it opened the way for a march into Egypt.

At once therefore, in 734, as we have seen,¹ the Assyrian armies set out on their march to the territories of Damascus. Terrified at their approach, Rezin and Pekah precipitately retreated from Judah and prepared to defend themselves; but at the first battle Rezin was utterly defeated; his charioteers made prisoners, his chariots destroyed; the horses of the cavalry captured; the archers, spearmen, and shield-bearing corps, indeed the whole army, scattered or taken. Rezin fled, alone, "like a deer," from the battle-field, to save his life, and threw himself into Damascus, trusting to its massive walls to defend him. Thither Pul at once advanced, shutting him up, as he tells us, like a caged bird. But the fortifications were too strong for a sudden attack, and after cutting down all the trees round the city for siege purposes, and crucifying the host of prisoners he had captured, the Great King himself marched off to devastate the neighbouring country, leaving a sufficient force to maintain the investment of Damascus. It was now that, as already related, he laid waste sixteen districts round the Syrian capital, carrying off men, women, children, flocks, herds, and all the property of the inhabitants worth seizing. The whole kingdom of Rezin, indeed, was subdued, Damascus alone excepted. It still held out.²

The catastrophe predicted by successive prophets, and already noticed,³ now burst upon the northern kingdom. The country north and west of the Lake of Galilee, forming the territory of Naphtali and Zebulon, and the fertile provinces of Bashan and Gilead, east of the Jordan, were

¹ See p. 231 ff.

² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 83. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 153.

³ See p. 233.

overrun, their cities destroyed, their people slain or deported, and the whole substance of the land either consumed or swept away. The cities round Samaria, and many places west of the Jordan, were also attacked; Samaria alone, like Damascus, rising, as yet, above the flood of victorious invasion. There Pekah took refuge, saving his throne for the moment, by humble submission, but Assyrian officials were set over the territory torn from him.¹

The Philistines next drew on themselves the wrath of the conqueror.² They had apparently fought against Judah, as allies of Syria and Israel. Hanno, king of Gaza, fled to Egypt at the approach of the Assyrians, but the city was plundered, and its gods borne off; Pul raising in it his own statue as a token of his conquest.³ Ekron and Ashdod also fell, and the king of Askelon destroyed himself, to escape a death of torture from the enemy. Imposing a heavy tribute on these cities, Pul crossed the Negeb to Edom, the stronghold of the fiercest enemy of Ahaz, and after subduing it, turned his arms against the queen of an Arab kingdom still farther south. She, like the other local rulers, had been a member of the Syrian league; but multitudes of her people were now carried off, with 30,000 camels and 20,000 oxen. Even Lower Egypt, long torn by intestine wars, forthwith sent an embassy to Pul, and a vassal king

¹ *Schrader*, p. 145. *Smith's Assyria*, pp. 83-85. The inconceivable sufferings caused by an Assyrian invasion may be in part realized by the record left of the cruelties of King Assur-nazir-pal about 150 years before, in his Mesopotamian wars. See vol. ii. pp. 399, 400.

² These details are repeated here, though already noticed, pp. 229-234. It seemed better to recall them to the reader, that the circumstances of Isaiah's life might be realized.

³ *Schrader*, p. 145.

was set over it.¹ Moab and Ammon, which lay on his way back to Damascus, were the last conquests of this great campaign.

Returning triumphantly from it, the Great King had the satisfaction of seeing the fall of the Syrian capital, in 732, after a siege of nearly two years. Rezin having been put to death, and vast multitudes of the people sent off to Kir, Pul celebrated this crowning victory by holding a great court or durbar in Damascus. The subject monarchs from far and near were required to honour this with their attendance, to flatter the glory of their master. They came, therefore, from every part, doubtless in great state, bringing the costliest gifts and tribute their ruined countries could yield. Among others, the princes of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Hamath, and the Philistine cities, assembled, with many more.² The name of Pekah of Samaria is not on the list, which is unfortunately mutilated, but that of Ahaz is given. Taking with him all the gold he could gather from the treasuries of the temple and his own exchequer and those of the royal family, he appeared with the other tributaries.³

Less than three years before, Isaiah had re-enforced, probably with additions of his own, ancient prophecies respecting Moab—now so terribly fulfilled. As no passage in his writings presents a more vivid picture of the horrors that surrounded Judah, I give it in full.⁴

¹ Smith's *Assyria*, p. 86.

² *Schrader*, p. 147.

³ 2 Kings xvii. 10, 18. 2 Chron. xxviii. 21, 24.

⁴ Knobel, Diestel, Cheyne and most others think this passage, chaps. xv. and xvi., an old prophecy—perhaps Jonah's—referring primarily to the conquests of Moab by Jeroboam II., with two verses added by Isaiah (xvi. 13, 14). Knobel fancies it refers to Pul's invasion; Cheyne leaves the question open. But no period suits better than that of Pul. Delitzsch refers it to this, and

"In one night," says the prophet, "Ar¹ of Moab is stormed,² is ruined; in one night Kir³ of Moab is stormed and ruined; the same night saw the taking of both!⁴ Bajith⁵ and Dibon⁶ have gone up to the high places to weep and supplicate the gods. Moab wails at Nebo⁷ and Medeba.⁸ All heads are shaved in token of mourning; all beards cut off. In the streets they wrap themselves in sackcloth; on the house tops, and in the spaces before the gates, they lament aloud, with flowing tears! Heshbon⁹ and Elealeh⁹ cry out: their lamentation is heard even at Jahaz;⁹ the warriors of Moab break out in wailing; their souls tremble within them!

"My heart cries aloud for Moab. Her fugitives flee far south, even to Zoar¹⁰ and the third Eglath;¹¹ they go weeping up the ascent of Luhith;¹² on the way to Horonaim¹³ they raise a wild cry at the destruction that has broken over them! For the flowing springs of Nimrim¹⁴ are stopped up; the herbage round them is

does not hint at its possibly earlier origin. Knobel's objection, that the invasion is said to have come from the north, may be removed by supposing it to have been made by a corps sent south from Damascus by Pul.

¹ Ar lay on the north border of Moab, on the Arnon.

² Isaiah xv. xvi.

³ Kir—now Kerak—was on the south border, 9 miles south of Rabbah.

⁴ *Delitzsch.*

⁵ North or north-west of Dibon.

⁶ The present Diban, where the Moabite stone was found. It lies in a low plain, less than 3 miles north of the central part of the Arnon.

⁷ The present Naban, 9 miles south of Heshbon.

⁸ In the same plain as Dibon.

⁹ Heshbon is on the Mismor or upland pastures of Moab, north of Medeba. Elealeh is about 2 miles north-west of it. Heshbon is 3,000 feet above the sea. Jazer or Jahsa is put, by Kiepert, 15 miles south of Heshbon.

¹⁰ South-east of the Dead Sea.

¹¹ It is not uncommon in the East to distinguish places of the same name by a number.

¹² On the way to Zoar.

¹³ A place known for its "two caves" (Horonaim), beyond Luhith.

¹⁴ Near the south border of Moab.

withered; the grass is gone; every green thing has perished! The sons of Moab flee from the wasted lands with their goods and all that they prize, to the far south, to the Spring of the Wilderness.¹ For wailing has spread round all the borders of Moab; its lamentation has reached to Eglaim² on the south, and the Terebinth Springs³ in the north. The waters of Dimon⁴ are full of blood, shed by the foe. But I will bring on it fresh sorrows; for I will set over the remnant left of Moab and the rest of the land, a ruler who shall be strong and fierce as a lion.⁵ "Send ye your tribute lambs once more to your ancient lord,⁶ the king of Judah, that ye may have his protection, ye fugitives of Moab who have escaped to Edom—send them, from Petra to which ye have fled—through the wilderness of the south, to the Mount of the daughter of Zion—Jerusalem!' Thus the chiefs of Moab advise their brethren. Then shall the daughters of Moab⁷ who have fled like homeless birds, like nestlings scared from their nest, to the gorge of the Arnon,⁸ hasten to Jerusalem, and there say—'Take counsel and help us, make a decision in our favour, give us protection, that its shadow, even in the glaring noon, may be like that of night, which securely conceals and guards; hide those driven out from their country; do not give up those wandering homeless! Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee. Be thou a covert to them from the spoiler. For henceforth Moab will no longer be an oppressor; violence is past; the treaders down are gone out of the land—from this time friendly relations will reign with Jerusalem. Through such mercy shall the throne be established. And there shall sit in

¹ The Wady el Ahse, between Moab and Edom, reaching to the Dead Sea.

² At the south end of the Dead Sea. It means "the two ponds."

³ *Bertheau*. Num. xxi. 16, the Springs of the Heroes, or Princes.

⁴ Not known.

⁵ Delitzsch thinks this was a king of Judah. But no king of Judah ruled Moab after Pul's time. Knobel and Diestel fancy it points to an unknown ruler. But see next verse.

⁶ 2 Kings iii. 4.

⁷ Its village or town populations.

⁸ The chief stream of Moab. See vol. ii. p. 356.

the tabernacle of David a judge, both seeking right and skilled in judgment.'"¹

But the people of Judah distrust these professions and treat them as only the language of passing despair. Moab assumes that the stern rule of Judah, which roused it to rebellion in former days, is gone, and that the reigning king will make his dominion over them permanent by his gentle uprightness. But this attempt to blame Judah for the past and to excuse their own unfaithfulness does not deceive. From his lofty throne, the ruler of Jerusalem answers them. Their words have been heard, but if Moab be still so little humbled or ready to own its past guilt, no help can be granted. Even the prophet, much as it pains him, feels it must be so.²

The answer is, therefore, returned.

"‘We have heard of the pride of Moab, of haughty Moab; of his arrogance, his insolence, his airs, his false and idle boastings, and we distrust you. We reject your entreaty.’

"Then shall Moab wail for Moab—the whole land shall wail; for the raisin-cakes³ of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn, utterly broken-hearted! For the vineyards of Heshbon are withered; the lords of the nations have broken down the chosen plants of

¹ *Knobel* and *Diestel*. Delitzsch thinks the prophet anticipates that after the enemy had gone from Moab, Judah will take it under her protection and reign with brotherly love over it. Knobel supposes that the embassy to Jerusalem asks leave to live in Edom—Judah having then the power there—and that the request is granted and promises of favour made. Cheyne fancies the king of Judah is the Messiah, and that the peace and love will come under His reign. This also is the view of Delitzsch. But it does not exclude the primary historical sense given in the text.

² This is the best explanation I can give of a passage which every version translates differently.

³ Hosea iii. 1 Kerak is still very rich in its grapes.

the vine of Sibmah,¹ whose branches reach, north, to Jazer; eastwards, to the wilderness; west and south, to the Dead Sea. Therefore I will mingle my tears with the weeping of Jazer² for the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh, for upon thy fruit harvest and vintage the wild cry of the enemy has fallen! Gladness is taken away, and joy from the garden-land, and in the vineyards there is no singing, or shouting; no treaders tread grapes in thy wine-presses; their cry of rejoicing have I made to cease. For all this, my heart sounds like a lute for Moab; my bosom for Kir-haresh.³ Nor shall any supplication of Moab to its idol gods be of avail. It shall come to pass, when Moab appears, in vain, on her high places and wearies herself there, and then betakes herself to her idol-temple to pray, she shall not prevail. Then shall Moab be ashamed of Chemosh and turn to Jehovah.⁴

"This is the word that Jehovah has spoken concerning Moab of old. But now Jehovah has spoken, saying, in three years,

¹ Close to Heshbon. Sibmah was the centre of the vine-growing districts of Moab.

² A Gadite town, 15 miles north from Heshbon. *Kiepert*. The Wady Sar (formerly Jazer) still produces immense quantities of grapes and raisins.

³ Kir-haresh or Kir-haraseth is the same as Kir—now, Kerak. Kir Moab means the Hill or Fortress of Moab. The other means the "fortress of burnt brick," or in Palmer's opinion, "Hill-town." *Desert of Exodus*, p. 367. Furrer's description of Kir deserves quotation. "Lofty heights dominate Kir almost all round, though it is, itself, fully 3,000 feet above the sea. From the ruins of the castle there, is a glorious view westward, over the Dead Sea, whose blue waters spread themselves picturesquely in their deep yellow basin of rocks. The highlands of Judah, rising behind in great terraces, form the background to the landscape. Mount Olivet and the hills round Bethlehem are clearly seen. Great streams foam down the gorges north and south of the town, till the beginning of summer. Olives, figs, and orange trees flourish on artificial terraces on the steep slopes." *Bib. Lex.*, vol. iii. p. 534.

⁴ These words are restored here from Jer. xlviii. 13, by Ewald and Cheyne.

strictly, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be dishonoured, with all its great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble."

While all this misery was wasting the land north and south, an Assyrian general, or Rabshakeh, had been besieging Tyre, which at last fell in 732, and had to pay a fine of 150 talents of gold, nominally equal to £400,000 of our money, but then worth many times more in purchasing value. In 731 Pul was fighting in Babylonia, and having once more conquered it, proclaimed himself its king, forcing Merodach Baladan I., who had claimed the throne, to do homage to him as king of South Chaldæa. In 729¹ Pekah's reign as an Assyrian vassal came to a sudden close at Samaria by the conspiracy of Hosea, the last king of Israel; but the reign of Pul was also near its end. The year 728 saw the death of Ahaz and the accession of Hezekiah in Judah, and in the next year, 727, the career of the Assyrian conqueror was over. So short a time had changed the chief actors in the great drama, in Assyria, Samaria, and Jerusalem! The Assyrian empire now stretched from Persia to Egypt, a distance of 1,200 miles, and from the Persian Gulf to Armenia, a distance of 800 miles. It was fast reaching the period of its greatest glory.

A short fragment of Isaiah, from the "year in which king Ahaz died,"² brings back the vividness with which men felt the great incidents of Pul's recent invasion. The Philistines had been beaten to the ground by the great conqueror, but they retained, under Assyrian vassalage, a number of the towns of Judah with their petty districts. They might hope that the weakness of

¹ *Schrader*, p. 150.

² If the inscription be genuine. But this is questioned. *Knobel*. *Diestel*. *Ewald*.

the reign of Ahaz would be perpetuated in that of his successor, but Isaiah heralds the advent of the new sovereign by a prediction of his glory.

"Rejoice not ye districts that make up Philistia¹ that the rod which has smitten you is broken.² For out of the root of the serpent there shall come forth a basilisk;³ its fruit shall be terrible as a flying dragon. The poorest of the poor in Judah shall eat his food in peace, and the needy shall lie down secure, but I will kill thy root with famine and the survivors will perish by the sword of the basilisk king. Howl! O gate; cry aloud, O city; melt with fear O whole Philistia; for out of the north cometh a smoke—the dust clouds of an advancing army, and the destroying fires which it spreads on its march, and there are no stragglers in the host. But Jerusalem shall be safe. When the envoys of the Great King—the King of Nations—shall come to her, they will be told that 'Jehovah has founded Zion, and that in her the afflicted fugitives of His people can find refuge.'"

¹ Isaiah xiv. 28–32. The *Sept.* has "all ye alien races."

² (?) That Judah is now weak.

³ (?) Hezekiah. Or the references may be to Pul's death, and to Sargon his redoubtable successor. The "basilisk" = "royal" serpent, or "king of serpents"—"a small, very poisonous reptile, about a span long, almost peculiar to Africa." *Mühlau und Volck.* The Hebrew name "Tsepha" implies its making a hissing sound. Gesenius calls it a viper. Tristram says it may possibly be the great yellow viper, which is active by night. *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 275. It is large enough to swallow a leveret, and is found in Palestine.





CHAPTER XII.

HEZEKIAH.

B.C. 724-695.

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

SARGON, B.C. 722-706.

SENNACHERIB, 705-682.

THE condition of Judah when Hezekiah, the "Strength of Jehovah," ascended the throne, at the age of twenty,¹ on the death of his father, in B.C. 728, was sad in the extreme. The political situation was humiliating. The ruinous tribute paid to Assyria by Ahaz was expected to be continued. The court party were in favour of its being so, as at once a protection to the State, and a bond of union with the Great King, whose slaves or pensioners they were in heart. Pride and oppression had developed themselves in a habitual disregard of justice, and a lawless violence towards the mass of the community. The numerous members of the royal family and the nobility monopolized the administration of justice, and encroached even on the power of the king. The common citizen, the peasant, and the shepherd trem-

¹ In 2 Kings xviii. 2, Hezekiah is said to have been twenty-five years old when he began to reign, but this seems a textual corruption for twenty, else Ahaz would have been only eleven when a father. He died at the age of thirty-six, and twenty-five from this leave eleven.

bled before them. The priests had caught the contagion of corruption, and even among the prophets a large proportion abused their office to the most selfish and dishonourable ends.¹ Indifferent as to the result, they gave forth mock revelations to the people as their patrons directed, and too often led the masses astray. The true prophets, faithful to their duty, were made to seem public enemies, while their rivals were held up as patriots. Public feeling was thus roused against the fearless and upright among the order, till a persecution, like that of Jezebel's days, seemed imminent, and the servants of God had to hide for their lives.² Still more; while the body of the people was thus impoverished; the rich, selfish and oppressive; the judges corrupt, and heathen superstition invading all ranks; the State was torn by rival factions. One party urged a treaty with Egypt; another the continuance of the Assyrian tribute, and a third stood up for national independence. Hezekiah had no light task before him to guide public affairs.

Yet he was not without a strong moral support from the better class of the population. The reformation of Jehoiada and Zechariah, followed as it was by the appearance of the new school of prophets, had aroused a deep and earnest religiousness in the hearts of not a few. The words of Joel, Amos and Hosea had been pondered; the teachings of the ancient oracles more fervently studied, and a religious feeling excited, destined to yield the richest spiritual fruits. Amidst these influences Isaiah had risen, the prince of the prophets—and to extend them, by instructing a body of disciples, was one of the great objects of his life. It was no longer necessary to form separate communities, to keep those who were

¹ Isa. ix. 13-15. Micah iii. 11; iv. 5.

² Isa. xxix. 21. Hos. ix. 8. Isa. xxx. 20.

being trained for the prophetic office apart from the general population. They could now live in their own homes, under the protection of the temple, and gather round their master in its courts. They no longer claimed to anoint successors to kings, or be the prime movers in violent political revolutions. Instead of the stormy zeal of their predecessors they sought to develop the humbler virtues of gentleness, patience, and lowly devotion to God. Men knew them as the "meek of the earth," and "the poor,"¹ who strove rather to bear injustice and suffering with lowly trust in God, than vindicate their personal wrongs. To such a body the best men of the nation looked as the hope of its nobler spiritual future. The thought of them cheered Isaiah in his deepest sorrow at the guilt and wickedness of his countrymen, and the judgments impending in consequence. "I hope in Jehovah," says he; "though He has hidden His face from the House of Jacob, yet will I hope in Him. Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and (good) portents in Israel."² "When the House of Jacob see that the disciples in their midst honour the Holy God, they also will sanctify and honour Him."³

The personal character and endowments of Hezekiah were illustrious. Ready for war when necessary, and alike brave and skilful in its conduct, he was more inclined to the gentle arts of peace. Though he could wrest cities from the Philistines and defend Jerusalem with resolution and ability, he gave his heart rather to the promotion of the internal welfare of his kingdom. Fond of agriculture and pastoral pursuits, like his grandfather Uzziah, he had great herds and flocks in the

¹ Isa. xi. 4; xxix. 19.

² Isa. viii. 17, 18. *Graetz*.

³ Isa. xxix. 23. *Graetz*.

Negeb and elsewhere,¹ and built shepherds' towers and large folds for their protection. Vineyards, oliveyards and cornfields were his delight. His tender religious sensibility, and poetic genius—the first instance of the latter since David—are seen in the hymn which he composed after his recovery from almost mortal sickness.² His love of culture displayed itself in his zeal for the preservation of the religious writings of his nation, of which their literature to a great extent consisted. Descended, apparently on his mother's side,³ from Zechariah, the favourite prophet of Uzziah, he inherited a lofty enthusiasm for the ancient faith. In direct contrast to his father, who had zealously favoured everything Assyrian, Hezekiah gave himself passionately to whatever was national, and devoted his life to the restoration of the worship of Jehovah and the purification of the land from the heathenism which Ahaz had introduced. The "Law" was his guiding star in public and private. The prophets were his honoured and cherished counsellors. As intelligent and refined as he was humble and godly, he, first, took measures to collect and arrange the Sacred Books. A Royal Commission appointed by him gathered from the lips of the people of both Israel and Judah⁴ the materials which now form the Book of Proverbs, or transcribed them from ancient manuscripts. Jewish tradition ascribes to him, further, the collecting of the Prophecies of Isaiah and the preservation of Ecclesiastes and Canticles.⁵ Nor was his reign unmarked by a brilliant literature of its own, for, besides the writings of contemporary prophets, various psalms of this period still survive in the Canon, and speak

¹ 2 Chron. xxxii. 28, 29.

² Isa. xxxviii. 9-20.

³ 2 Kings xviii. 2.

⁴ Prov. xxv. 1.

⁵ Gesenius, *Iesaiä*, vol. i. p. 16.

of an intellectual activity which must have shown itself in every direction. Ahaz had closed the gates of the temple; Hezekiah not only reopened them, but put the whole building in thorough repair, and revived the use of the Psalms of David and Asaph in public worship,¹ so that the multitude once more heard them sung to the rich chants and music which had delighted their forefathers, but had been long disused.² To secure the maintenance of the priests and Levites he restored the payment of the tithes fixed by the Law of Moses, including "the first fruits of corn, wine, oil, and date syrup, and of all the increase of the field."³ Without oppressing the people, his wise and upright rule kept his treasury always full, and his palace boasted of stores of spices and costly oil, and a well-appointed armoury.⁴ Jewish tradition, magnifying his fame and merits in after years, fancied that he must have been the promised Messiah; and the inspired compiler of the Second Book of Kings only reflects the universal homage of contemporary public opinion in the grand eulogium, that "he trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."⁵

As the grandson of a prophet, Hezekiah appears to have shown a bias towards the ancient religion from his early youth. The prophet Micah seems, however, to have exerted, at least in one instance, a powerful spiritual influence on him. Contrary to what had become the rule, that seer had retained in many respects the outward characteristics of the ancient school of prophets. Humble

¹ 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

² 2 Chron. xxix. 27.

³ 2 Chron. xxxi. 2, 5. Exod. xxii. 29; xxiii. 16-19. Prov. iii. 9, 10.

⁴ 2 Kings xx. 13.

⁵ 2 Kings xviii. 5.

and rustic in position compared with Isaiah, we find him wandering through the streets of Jerusalem stripped of his upper garments, and mingling his prophetic appeals and warnings with loud wails, like the deep hollow roar of the ostrich or the piteous howl of the jackal.¹ Such an apparition, proclaiming from day to day the sins of Jerusalem, and threatening, even in the royal presence and before the court, its impending ruin, struck the king with awe,² and seems to have been the turning point of his religious life. His attendants, aghast at the intrusion of the prophet and at his daring words, would have had the offender seized and punished, but the king took the wiser course of listening to his appeals.

His first care was the burial of his unworthy father; but even in this he showed respect for popular feeling; denying the remains a place in the royal sepulchre, though he caused them to be interred within the walls of Jerusalem.³ This done, he threw open the gates of the temple in the first month of his reign, and began the repairs of the structure.⁴ Assembling the priests and Levites in the open space east of it, he enjoined them to commence its purification at once, and prepare it for the restoration of the public services. The sacred lamps had been long extinguished, and neither incense nor burnt sacrifices had been offered, but all this must be reversed. The calamities of the nation, he told them, had been the punishment of such neglect; they must now be diligent to repair it. Having first purified their own persons, they zealously carried out the royal command,

¹ Micah i. 8. *Kleinert*. "The voice of the ostrich is a deep, hollow, rumbling sound, so like the roar of a lion that even practised ears have been deceived by it." *Wood's Nat. Hist.* vol. iii. p. 648.

² Jer. xxvi. 18.

³ 2 Chron. xxviii. 27.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxix. 3.

and in a fortnight had made the building fit for use. The "uncleanness" found in it was carried down to the Kedron and scattered on the stream; the altar of burnt-offering restored to its place, and all the temple vessels and furniture, which Ahaz had removed, made ready for their respective purposes. A sin-offering for the kingdom, the temple, and the people, was next offered by the priests, by Hezekiah's order; the choirs and instrumental bands of the Levites standing in their old places and joining in the service; the trumpets sounding, and the singers and musicians filling the air once more with the words and music of the old psalms, while the king and court united with the congregation in lowly worship. It was a worthy inauguration of a noble reign.¹

Meanwhile, the northern kingdom was passing rapidly to its fall. Hosea had ascended the throne of Samaria in 731,² three years before Hezekiah's reign began. The recent death of the conqueror, Pul, or Tiglath-pileser, had already led to a fresh revolt in Babylonia, which detained the Assyrian army in the east, and Hosea seized the opportunity thus offered, to form a league with Phenicia and other States of Palestine, and strike once more for independence. To this movement he had been craftily incited by So,³ or Schabaka, king of Egypt, of the Ethiopian dynasty, who again sought to protect himself by an uprising in Palestine, from the

¹ A hint of the moral deterioration of the priests is given in the statement, that few of them attended in comparison with the number of Levites, and that the latter were more conscientious in personal purification than their dignified brethren. 2 Chron. xxx. 3, 4. For the whole incident, see the chapter throughout.

² 729 is the year given by some for the murder of Pekah.

³ 2 Kings xvii. 4. So is also called Savah. Lenormant, *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 350. See p. 236.

dreaded advance of Assyria to the Nile.¹ But Tiglath-pileser was ere long succeeded by Shalmaneser IV., against whom no revolts were able to make head. Babylon having been again subdued, he was speedily free to turn his arms to the west, and forthwith marched towards the Mediterranean. In 724, as already stated, Tyre was invested by one corps, Samaria by another; the siege being pushed on with increased determination after Hosea had been taken prisoner and led off into captivity.² Meanwhile, in 722, while it was in progress, Shalmaneser died, and was succeeded by Sargon, one of the greatest of the Assyrian kings.

Tenacious, energetic, and gifted with military genius, the new monarch ultimately made himself master of both Tyre and Samaria, which Egypt did not attempt to help, after having led them into revolt. What their capture involved has been already described, in part; but the Assyrian sculptures add some details to the picture. To judge from the slabs in Sennacherib's palace, portraying the siege of Lachish,³ Samaria was defended by double walls, with parapets and towers, and by fortified bastions. Against these works a huge encircling mound or broad wall was raised, strongly built of stones, bricks, earth and branches of trees, and on this, battering rams and towers of attack were planted. To destroy these was the great aim of the besieged. The sculptures show the battlements and towers thronged with defenders, showering arrows, javelins, stones and blazing torches on the assailants, while the Assyrians beneath pour water with great ladles on the flaming missiles which threaten to destroy their engines. But it was all in vain. After three years of close investment and fierce attack, as we

¹ Well described by Maspero, pp. 389, 390.

² See p. 238.

³ Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 149.

have seen, the capital of the northern kingdom fell, and then followed the usual sequel of Assyrian victories. The slabs show a procession of captives issuing from a gateway, and making their way to the presence of the Great King, who sits gorgeously arrayed, on his throne to receive them. Some of the prisoners are put to death before him by the dagger and sword; others lie on the ground in the agony of being flayed alive. In every direction men are carrying off the spoils of the city; arms, shields, chariots, vases, furniture, and whatever else was of value. Then followed the great deportation of the people to distant parts, and Samaria and Israel were virtually blotted out from among the nations. An Assyrian Resident henceforth stood alongside its kings.¹

That Hezekiah should have remained passive while the Ten Tribes were thus being crushed and extinguished, was no doubt a necessity forced on him by his weakness. To have helped them would have been only a useless self-sacrifice. The very existence of Judah depended, for the moment, on the maintenance of peace with Assyria.

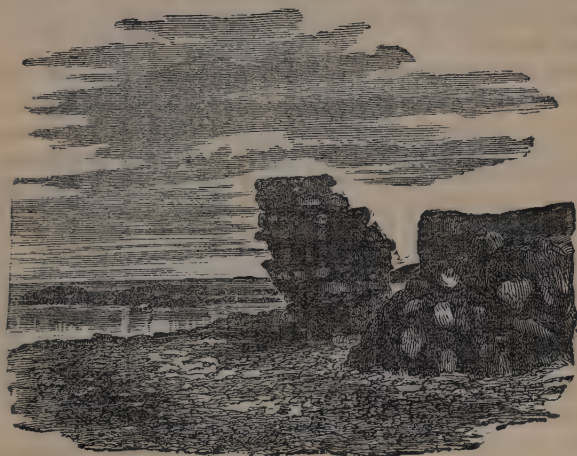
It may have been about this time that Isaiah uttered the striking prediction of the destruction of Tyre, which forms the twenty-third chapter of his Prophecies. Instead of the friendly alliance of the days of David and Solomon, Phenicia had turned bitterly against Judah since the revolution of Jehoiada, by which heathenism had been proscribed and Athaliah murdered—a Tyrian in religion and sympathy, and, by her mother Jezebel, in blood. Its slave marts had been filled with Jews of both sexes, torn from their homes in Judah by Philistine raiders, and its slave dealers had ruthlessly sold them across the sea to distant heathen countries.² The bitterest hatred had thus sprung up against the Tyrians, and found sorrow-

¹ See pp. 161, 196.

² Joel iii. 6.

ful expression in the inspired utterances of Isaiah. The great city had already suffered terribly by the five years siege under Shalmaneser and Sargon, but this was only the first of the successive attacks by which it was ultimately to be overthrown. The events of the near and distant future stood revealed to the prophet, and among them the doom of the proud mistress of the seas.

The people of Jerusalem must, however, have been filled with wonder, when in one of his public addresses,



REMAINS OF TYRE.

the crowd around heard him predict in burning words the fall of the great merchant city,

“Howl, ye Tarshish-ships” cried he, “for Tyre is laid waste! The people of Cyprus will tell you, as you call, homeward bound, at their island, that ‘there is no house in Tyre left standing; no home left to welcome you back!’

“Be dumb for terror, ye of the island,¹ whose streets the merchants of Sidon throng; who have brought over the sea the

¹ Of Tyre. *Ewald.*

corn of Egypt, the harvest of the Nile valley, till you became the mart of nations!

"Blush red for shame, O Sidon; for Tyre, the city of the sea—the sea-fortress—speaks, saying—'In vain have I been in labour and brought forth children—the colonies and cities sprung from me,—in vain have I nourished young men and brought up maidens: I am laid waste!' When the news of the destruction of Tyre reaches Egypt that land will tremble for fear and sorrow!"

"Flee away, ye people of Tyre, to your distant colony, Tarshish;¹ wail aloud, ye inhabitants of the Phenician coast! 'Is this, then, your once joyous city,' men will say, 'whose rise is from the distant past, but whose feet must now bear her off to foreign lands?'"

"Who has devised this against Tyre, the dispenser of crowns, whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the nobles of the earth? Jehovah of Hosts has done so; to bring down the pride of all her glory, and to humble the nobles of the earth.

"Thou, Tarshish, daughter of Tyre, art free now: thy mother-city is no more able to oppress thee! Thou mayest spread thyself over thy territory, free as the Nile over Egypt. There is no longer a hindrance!"²

"Jehovah has stretched out His hand over the sea and shaken the kingdoms with fear, by His command against the great merchant city, that its fortresses be destroyed. He has said also, 'Thou shalt no more rejoice, thou dishonoured virgin-daughter of Sidon.'³ Arise, flee away to Cyprus. But even there thou shalt have no rest.'⁴

¹ At Cadiz, in Spain.

² Naegelsbach supposes the words in the text—lit. the "girdle is gone," refer to a toll or dues on passing some barrier; but this seems weak. The treatment of the Tyrian colonies by the mother-city was proverbially harsh, but, now she had fallen, this girdle to their development was gone. Mommsen has a vivid picture of the blind tyranny and narrowness of the policy followed in Carthage, the greatest of Phenician colonies. *Geschichte Roms*, vol. ii. p. 507.

³ Tyre was an offshoot from Sidon. Hitherto it had been virgin in the sense of unconquered.

⁴ The inscription of Sargon states that he crossed the sea of

"Behold the land of the Chaldæans.¹ Its people till of late were unknown. Assyria has now made it a wilderness for savage beasts. The Chaldæans built high their towers; they raised their palaces, but the Assyrian has made the whole land a heap of ruins.²

"Howl, ye Tarshish-ships, for your stronghold is laid waste. And when it is so, it shall come to pass that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, as if lying under the ban of a king whose decree cannot be changed.³ Yet at the end of the seventy years, after the fall of the Chaldæan kingdom, it shall be with Tyre as the song of the harlot has it: 'Take the harp, go round the city, thou forgotten harlot. Play skilfully, sing many songs, that thou mayst again be remembered.' For it shall come to pass at the end of seventy years,⁴ that Jehovah will visit Tyre

the setting sun, and in the third year conquered a land which can hardly be any other than Cyprus. *Cheyne*, vol. i. p. 138. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. ii. p. 49.

¹ Merodach Baladan had done homage to Sargon as to "the king of Chaldæa"; the race who gave the region (on the Lower Euphrates) this name having then first come prominently into notice. The Assyrian king had previously devastated the country in successive campaigns. Hence the words that follow are translated by some: "Its people are no more." The rendering given is that of Naegelsbach.

² This allusion to the Chaldæans as the future destroyers of Tyre is striking, for, when the prophet wrote, their land was ruined and their future glory as rulers of Babylon undreamed of. Nabopolassar, the founder of the Chaldæan kingdom of Babylon, threw off the Assyrian yoke about B.C. 625, and Nebuchadnezzar, his son and successor, reigned from B.C. 604 to B.C. 560.* But Hezekiah's reign, during which Isaiah's prophecy was uttered, extended from B.C. 724 to B.C. 695, so that there is here a disclosure of events to happen nearly or quite a century after Isaiah's death. And they did happen as he predicted.

³ Esther viii. 8.

⁴ Perhaps a conventional expression for a lengthened period. This usage is not uncommon. See *Speaker's Comm.* on Ezek. xxix. 13. This may well refer to the prostration of the city after

* *Schrader*, in *Rehm*.

with prosperity once more, so that she shall get her harlot hire again, and begin afresh her uncleanness with all the kingdoms of the earth.¹

"But her gain and her hire shall be holy to Jehovah (for she shall in the end be converted to Him). Nor will it then be heaped up or hoarded (for herself, or for her idols, as hitherto); it will flow forth to satisfy the wants of God's people, who dwell before Jehovah at Jerusalem. To them shall come her gains; that they may have food in plenty and raiment of beauty.²

its capture by Alexander. It must have been long before it recovered from such a disaster.

¹ Perhaps her corrupting influence on heathen nations is intended. It also, however, evidently refers to her trading relations.

² Tyre was founded about 2,750 years before Christ, according to the statements of its priests to Herodotus. It is spoken of in the Book of Joshua as "the strong city."* It seems first to have suffered from the spread of the Assyrian empire, in B.C. 860; payment of tribute by it to King Assur-nazir-pal being then recorded. In 840 we find it buying off Shalmaneser II. by payment of large sums, and again in 742, a century later, ransoming itself in the same way from the armies of Tiglath-pileser II. or Pul. A little later it revolted from that monarch, and had to pay a fine of 150 talents of gold, weighing about three tons, and worth perhaps twenty times as much as at present. Its first siege, so far as we know, was that of Shalmaneser IV. and Sargon. The city on the mainland was destroyed, but that on the island of Tyre held out for five years. This siege ended about 720, and was followed by great prosperity for a hundred and fifty years.† It was next besieged by Nebuchadnezzar for thirteen years, from B.C. 585 to 572, but he seems to have failed in taking it, though it was forced to become tributary to him and to the Persian kings after him. In B.C. 332, the island city was attacked by Alexander, and for the time crushed. Using the ruins of old Tyre on the mainland to build a mole by which his soldiers could reach the island, he took the still virgin fortress in seven months, and sold 30,000 of the inhabitants as slaves. Still it was not destroyed. Regaining its commercial glory after a while, it continued even

* xix. 29.

† See Ezek. xxvii.

A short respite from the presence of the Assyrian armies in Palestine followed the destruction of Samaria; the garrisons and scattered posts only, remaining. In the east, Merodach Baladan, a noble Chaldæan patriot, had retaken Babylon in the year 722, and proclaimed himself king, so that Sargon was occupied, in 721, in wresting it once more from him.¹ Hezekiah could thus for the moment breathe freely, and used the calm to promote the restoration of the worship of Jehovah and the purification of the land from idolatry. The time-honoured use of the tops of hills as local sanctuaries had become greatly corrupted, nor was there any longer the same need of it, since the erection of the temple

in the days of St. Jerome, in the fourth century after Christ, to be "one of the noblest, and most beautiful of cities."* Its conversion to Christianity, in the general sense always implied in speaking of great communities, was then already an accomplished fact. St. Paul, indeed, had found a Christian church in it.† In the beginning of the fourth century Methodius was its bishop, and in 315 a great church was built in it by Eusebius of Cæsarea. In 335, a famous Synod was held within its walls. Under the Crusaders it had an archbishop, and was still spoken of as a "most noble city."‡ In 1291, however, it was retaken by the Saracens, and from that time it has sunk into utter decay. Even its ruins have been in great part removed. Last century, when Hasselquist visited it, he found it had only ten inhabitants. The ruins now seen on the peninsula of Tyre are those of the buildings of Crusaders or Saracens. Tyre of the Phenicians, if any of it still remains, lies below the wreck of the city of the Crusaders, and of those of Mahometan and early Christian Tyre. So exactly, after long centuries, has the word of prophecy been fulfilled. *Survey of Western Palestine. Memoirs*, vol. i. pp. 72-77. *Riehm*, art. *Nebucadnezzar*. *Schenkel*, art. *Tyrus*. *Sayce*, in *Smith's Babylonia*, p. 160.

¹ See p. 240.

* Jer., *In Ezek.* xxvii.

† Acts xxi. 3, 4.

‡ Joh. Wirziburgensis, c. A.D. 1125.

at Jerusalem. Hence, though even Abraham and Jacob, the great forefathers of the race, had built altars on the hills, and though it might be difficult for those at a distance to come up to the capital, Hezekiah determined to remove all the high places,¹ and thus carry out the ancient requirement of the Law, that there should be one great national religious centre.² Other kings had

¹ Lieut. Conder thinks that the cairns found on heights, and even in the Jordan valley, may have been Canaanite high places, though he also speaks of the possibility of their having been raised over graves of distinguished men. In not a few places, moreover, for example on one of the summits of Mount Nebo, he found a cromlech, consisting of two huge stones supporting a third, laid on them, like the top of an altar, and he supposes these may have been "high places." The one on Nebo, indeed, he suggests, may possibly be one of the seven altars built by Balaam for Balak. There are, besides, numerous circles of huge stones more or less perfect—one especially well preserved, at Diban, in Moab, and these he connects in the same way with "high places." The analogy of Mahometan custom certainly gives this idea support. Their sacred places are circles built up for about two feet with stones a foot long. Each circle is provided with a doorway or small cromlech on the west, formed by two stones—generally well hewn and taken from a neighbouring ruin, supporting a third stone or lintel. This serves as an altar on which are laid offerings, consisting of blue beads, fragments of pottery or of purple basalt, bits of china, the locks of guns, etc. The ploughs of the Arabs are left inside the circle with perfect safety. In some cases sacred trees grow close by. These seem to be the counterparts of the ancient "Gilgals," or sacred rings. *Pal. Fund Reports*, 1881, pp. 278-9.

² Deut. xii. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; xiv. 23; xvi. 5, 6. Josh. ix. 27. 1 Kings viii. 29. The distinct command to have only one central place of religious worship is first met with in Deuteronomy, and the latest critics placidly affirm that it was invented and foisted into the sacred text during the period of the struggle to put down high places. A copy of the original Deuteronomy they tell us was found in Josiah's reign, and manipulated to suit the views

attempted it, but had failed: succeeding perhaps in removing those which were merely idolatrous, but feeling it impossible to run counter to the popular prejudices by destroying such as were consecrated to Jehovah.¹ But Hezekiah had the stern zeal of a Puritan. Far and near, through both Judah and Israel, the high places were thrown down, in spite of an opposition so serious that it was used, many years after, by the Assyrian general to stir up popular feeling against the king as a daring and impious innovator, who had provoked the anger of God on the nation by this interference with His worship.² The sun-pillars—apparently obscene emblems³—were, also, everywhere shattered in pieces; and the foul Asherahs cut down. Nor did the reform stop here.

of the age. But what proof is there of this? In the existence of the Tabernacle in the wilderness we have the principle, and it is enforced by the command in Leviticus,* that sacrifices be offered only at the door of the sacred Tent. But Wellhausen gets over this by saying that the Tabernacle is later than the Temple, and was copied from it! *Geschichte Israels*, vol. i. p. 38. Stade is equally adventurous in his explanation. He ascribes Deuteronomy and Leviticus to the time of the exile (*Geschichte des V. Israel*, p. 72), and, like Wellhausen,—in fact, as his echo,—takes for granted that Deuteronomy was worked up to suit the ideas of the last days of Judah and those of Ezra. Mere theories, both, with what seem to me the very flimsiest arguments to support them. But Stade must have the palm of literary boldness, for he laughs at the idea of a residence in Egypt, an Exodus, or a conquest under Joshua, and indeed treats all the historical documents of the Old Testament as a mass of legend with a few grains of truth.

¹ 2 Chron. xiv. 3; xvii. 6, comp. with 1 Kings xv. 14. 2 Chron. xx. 33.

² 2 Kings xviii. 22. 2 Chron. xxxii. 12.

³ Possibly sun-dials, see p. 133. But Phallus worship was a characteristic of the temples of Baal and of Asherah.

* xvii. 4, 5.

Strong minded and intelligent in his faith, Hezekiah was able to realize that even the most venerable relic became a source of evil, worthy of destruction, when abused by inveterate superstition. The brazen serpent, made in the wilderness nearly 800 years before, at the command of Moses, had escaped the perils of many centuries, and stood in the midst of Jerusalem as well-nigh the most sacred of the national treasures. It had, however, become a source of evil. An altar had been built before it on which incense was offered, as if the relic possessed inherent divine power. To Hezekiah it remained, however, only the instrument, worthless in itself, through which Jehovah had once chosen to work ; only "a piece of brass." There was too much superstition in the land to leave so specious a pretext for its indulgence, and the brazen serpent, was therefore taken down and broken up. False esthetics had no hold on the vigorous-minded king. As in every age of true religious zeal, they fell into the background before higher considerations.¹

Till Hezekiah's reign the passover seems to have been kept privately in each household or family group over the land, where kept at all.² But the temple was henceforth to be the one centre of public worship. Hitherto the national religion had been mainly local. Not only were many hill tops the sites of shrines ; other spots, such as Beersheba and Hebron, were also famous ancient sanctuaries still in use. But to secure a purification of religion, centralization was necessary. He determined, therefore, to hold a great national passover at Jerusalem. The error in reckoning caused by the shortness of the lunar months had, however, made the original time for

¹ See *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 103. *Latterday Pamphlets*, p. 34.

² *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 223.

the feast, in the first month, no longer exact; the barley harvest, after which it should be held, as a spring feast, falling, now, nearly a month later. The date for the festival was therefore transferred to the second month, and a similar error in the calendar henceforth prevented by the intercalation of an extra month, when necessary, to adjust the lunar to the solar year.¹ Such additional months had long been in use at Nineveh, with which Judea had been closely connected since the reign of Ahaz.

The ruin of the northern kingdom had touched the heart of the people of Judah, and their ancient bitterness of feeling had passed into tender regret. The remnant of the population which had not been swept away to Assyria were now the objects of a loving sympathy that sought to cheer and draw them closer to their brethren in the south. Messengers were therefore sent through the whole land, from Dan to Beersheba, inviting all to come to the passover at Jerusalem, but as a rule their invitation was rejected with contemptuous scorn.² The wreck of the nation had finally lapsed into heathenism and ceased to be Israelites except in blood, nor could even that be claimed after a few years, intermarriages with other races becoming habitual. Some, however, were still found in Manasseh, Asher, and Zebulun, who honoured the God of their fathers, and gladly accepted the summons.

For such a gathering fitting preparations had to be made. Strict in his obedience to the Mosaic law, Hezekiah caused the Holy City to be thoroughly purified. The idolatrous altars raised by Ahaz³ for burnt offerings and for incense, were destroyed, and their material thrown into the Kedron, below the walls. The temple itself had

¹ *Graetz*, vol. ii. p. 228.

² 2 Chron. xxx. 10.

³ 2 Chron. xxviii. 24.

been purified at the beginning of the reign, and repaired where necessary. Enthusiasm spread through the whole community. Priests and Levites who had neglected to complete their ceremonial cleansing were roused to do so, and, when the great day at length arrived, stood in their prescribed places, after the order fixed since the time of David. As in former times, the household fathers, where duly "clean," sacrificed the lambs for their families, but Levites took the place of those who were "unclean." Nor was any ritual inexactness allowed to mar the universal joy. Many worshippers from the northern kingdom, ignorant, perhaps, in the dark times that had passed over their land, of the formal observances demanded, had failed to comply with them. But Hezekiah, ever earnest after the reality, and comparatively indifferent to the merely outward, decreed that they should join in the feast as well as others; not forgetting to pray for them, lest they should suffer, as threatened in Leviticus, for neglect of the commandments of the Law.¹

Then came the great celebration, with such glory of chants and instrumental music, such wealth of gifts for sacrifice, such vast multitudes in attendance, and such general gladness, as recalled the solemnity of the Dedication of the Temple by Solomon.² Seven days, the legal duration, were not long enough for such a jubilee; the feast was prolonged for seven days more.

All that could be done by mere outward means towards a permanent revival of the ancient faith was thus being carried out. For the first time, the tithes were formally secured for the Levites and priests, and registers of birth strictly kept, to secure their legal standing.³ If regularity

¹ Lev. xv. 31. Num. ix. 6. This statement shows that two books of the Pentateuch, at least, were then known.

² 2 Chron. vii. 1-10; xxx. 26.

³ 2 Chron. xxxi.

in public worship ; exactness of its observance, and removal of everything idolatrous, could have secured a healthy religious life in the nation, it would have been attained.

Amidst all, moreover, Isaiah and other prophets were zealously proclaiming, from day to day, the highest spiritual truths. Always lofty in their morality, and illustrious in their defence of popular liberty and national independence, they had gradually risen to purer and more far-reaching conceptions of the future. The hope of a great Messiah had been known from early ages, but had become more distinct from the time of David. Yet it only gradually attained its more spiritual and sublime elevation. Joel had prophesied of a terrible day of Jehovah, when judgment executed on the heathen in the Valley of Jehoshaphat would introduce a golden age, and the Spirit would be poured on all flesh. Amos had cheered the faithful of his day by foretelling that the fallen tent of David would again be raised.¹ Hosea had told those of the next generation that the children of Israel would one day return, and seek Jehovah, their God, and David their king ; and, like his predecessors, he had painted the happiness of that time. But the development of a higher spiritual tone, under Hezekiah, purified and sublimed these glad anticipations. A bright hopefulness and wide survey of the future, like that which had once characterized the young nation under Moses and Joshua, re-appeared, now, when the State was slowly sinking.

Pious souls in the past had cherished the fond hope of a great kingdom of God to be realized in Israel, and its triumph necessarily implied a fitting and victorious leader and head. The glory of David, and the unbroken succession of his House in Judah, coupled with the sacred

¹ Amos ix. 11.

intimations of prophets, naturally led to the conviction that the expected Messiah could spring only from him. But it was Isaiah whose great soul first realized in their fulness the attributes essential in the Expected One, as the perfect Head of the true Theocracy. Even the best among the kings had come short of them; the hopes of the godly respecting them had been ever deferred. Yet, so much the more did the ideal of the king, needed to introduce the perfected reign of God among men, clear itself from all human mists and colourings in such a mind as that of Isaiah. He felt that the promise had gone forth that God would “stablish the throne of David’s kingdom for ever,”¹ and nothing could shake his faith in it. Alike before the despairing and oppressed, or the disbelieving and mocking, he proclaimed his firm trust in this great hope. Nor did he falter even when the hosts of Sennacherib seemed to threaten the immediate ruin of the State, for his confidence never wavered, even when the Assyrian was at the gates of Jerusalem. To him we owe the bodying forth of the Messianic expectations of the past, in a clear and majestic definiteness, which henceforth made his utterances the stay and support of succeeding ages. The Hope of Israel must be one who Himself fulfilled all the demands of God, the Supreme King, so that their power and truth might work through His example and life. A divine might and glory must dwell in Him, to enable Him thus to fulfil an ideal in which all before Him had failed. If He, Himself, did not absolutely realize perfection, it could not be that the perfect kingdom of God could ever be attained. But such an one must come, else the religion which demanded Him was false. If thus completely fulfilling all God’s law, however, He must be the Messiah—the glorious King of the true

¹ 2 Sam. vii. 13. 1 Kings xi. 39.

people of Jehovah—expected in all ages of the past. That He should come, was to be the hope, the yearning, the supplication of all. It was blessed even to look trustingly towards His advent, and try to realize personally a glimpse of His perfections!

From Isaiah's day, the Messiah thus first vividly held before the nation, with all the attractions and distinctness of inspired genius, was the absorbing subject of Jewish desire and expectation. That He would assuredly appear in due time it was deemed impious to question; how He would do so, henceforth engrossed the thoughts of the race. That He should spring from the root of David was still proclaimed by the prophets, but His external glory or natural descent were treated as of altogether inferior moment to His spiritual majesty. Such a Messiah could only come as the Prince of Peace; violence would be in contradiction to His nature and aims. The time of His appearance, however, was not as yet revealed even to Isaiah. Still, the glorious ideal was before mankind. From it other prophets caught enthusiasm, and the godly of generation after generation walked in its light.¹

But the bright visions of Isaiah and Micah were far from fulfilment. The moral cancer of heathenism had gained too deep a hold on the nation to be eradicated by the zeal of any prince, however zealous, and the prophetic visions of future Messianic glory had yet to be darkened by denunciations and warnings. The goodness of Judah like that of Ephraim proved to be as the morning cloud or the early dew that goeth away.²

¹ *Ewald*, vol. iii. p. 707.

² Hosea vi. 4. The morning cloud is a mass of dense white mist—the moisture brought up from the Mediterranean by the prevalent westerly winds of summer and autumn. It becomes condensed on passing over the colder night air of the land. The

morning clouds are always of a brilliant silvery white, save at such times as they are dyed with the delicate opal tints of dawn. They hang low upon the mountains of Judah, and produce effects of indescribable beauty as they float far down in the valleys, or rise, to wrap themselves round the summits of the hills. In almost every instance, by about seven o'clock the heat has dissipated these fleecy clouds, and to the vivid Eastern imagination the morn has folded her outstretched wings. . . . Billowy masses of silvery white or opaline clouds roll in the valleys in fantastic everchanging forms, from which the summits of the mountains, now stand out like rocky islands in a wide chain of picturesque lakes, and now, seem like the low foot hills of mighty snow-clad ranges, towering behind them to the sky. The scene shifts rapidly as the dense masses of vapour, glistening with all the exquisite brightness of Syrian light, wave hither and thither, or are sucked up by the rising sun, leaving behind them for a few hours a delightful moisture. Neil's *Palestine Explored*, pp. 46, 136. A book abounding with original and striking illustrations of Scripture gained during a long residence in the East.





CHAPTER XIII.

JUDAH AFTER THE FALL OF SAMARIA.

THE PROPHETS MICAH AND ISAIAH.

WHILE the strenuous exertions required of Hezekiah in restoring the ancient religion, reveal the moral and social corruption of the time, the utterances of the prophets of his reign speak no less forcibly of the deep shadow which accompanied its splendours.

So far as we know, the first of the national prophet-preachers of these later times had been Micaiah or Micah, in the reign of Ahab. After him, men like Joel, Amos and Hosea had risen, the Savonarolas and Bernards of their day; culminating in the great inspired orators of the reign of Hezekiah. His reign was the Augustan age of prophecy in every sense. Not only the transcendent genius of Isaiah, but that of Micah of Moresheth, still show in the inspired writings which bear their names, the wondrous addresses to which their generation listened.

Very little is known of Micah beyond the fact that he came from the neighbourhood of Gath,¹ and was thus a native of the Maritime Plain, with its fiery summer heat;

¹ Micah i. 14. As late as the time of Jerome a hamlet in the neighbourhood of Eleutheropolis was famous as the home of Micah, and a grave there, over which a Christian church had been built, was shown as his. *Riehm.*

its luxuriant vineyards, orchards, and cornfields; its busy towns, and its glimpses of the great sea from every undulation of the landscape. The days of the old prophets had passed away. Elisha had lived as a staid citizen in Samaria; Joel had passed his days quietly in Jerusalem; Isaiah was a member of its higher society. The hairy cloak and leathern girdle of Elijah, his locusts and wild honey, were traditions of the past. But in Micah his austerity and fierce energy seemed to have returned. The strange Oriental fervour of his manner, the corresponding singularity of his dress, and the wild cries and piercing wails with which he accompanied his public utterances, have already been described.¹ His style, sometimes abrupt and obscure, was all his own. Its rich and varied imagery spoke of his birth and life in the lowlands. The dew, the shower upon the grass, the flocks in their folds, the luxuriant vineyards; the single vine and fig tree in the rural homesteads; the towers of the flocks; the sheaves on the threshing-floor; the lion among the sheep; the treading of olives; the gathering of summer fruit, and the gleanings of the vintage supply his metaphors and illustrations.²

Born apparently in the reign of Jotham, or at the close of that of Uzziah, he had seen the apostasy of Ahaz, and the manifold wickedness which had followed, and still abounded under the good Hezekiah. The opening verses of his prophecies, as they now stand, date from before the siege of Samaria, but the successive sections were probably delivered as different addresses, afterwards collected, like those of Jeremiah, and read, perhaps as a whole,³ at stated times, to the people. Such

¹ See p. 333.

² Micah i. 8; ii. 12; iv. 4, 8, 12; v. 8; vi. 15; vii. 1.

³ Jer. xxxvi. 2, 4, 6.

preaching, by one so intensely earnest, must have had overpowering influence in any community, and it is not therefore wonderful to find that the elders of the city at a later time ascribed to it the great revival at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, and even the conversion of the king himself.¹

The traditions of the great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah may have supplied the sublime imagery with which he commences :

"Give ear, all ye peoples!² hearken, O land, and all that is therein!³ The Lord Jehovah appeareth as a witness against you; the Lord from His holy Temple-palace above.⁴

"For, lo, Jehovah comes forth from his place; He descends and sets His feet on the mountain-heights of the land; the mountains melt under Him, the valleys cleave asunder; like wax before the fire, like water rushing down from high places.⁵ All this is for the transgression of Jacob, and for the sins of the House of Israel.⁶ And what is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And whose example spreads sin on the high places of Judah?⁷ Is it not Jerusalem?⁸

"Therefore will I make Samaria a ruin-heap of the field; I will turn it into vineyard plantations; I will roll down its stones into the valley beneath, and make bare its foundations. All its carved

¹ Jer. xxvi. 17-19. See Pusey's *Minor Prophets*, p. 200.

² Micah i. 2.

³ Lit. "and its fulness."

⁴ Not the temple of Jerusalem. See ver. 3.

⁵ The autumn rains form great torrents which sweep down as floods from the hills.

⁶ Jacob and Israel = the nation as a whole.

⁷ *Eichhorn*. If he be right, these words must have been spoken before Hezekiah destroyed the high places. Knobel and Diestel agree with him.

⁸ The apostasy of the land had always spread from the capital. Jeroboam I. made Israel to sin. Ahab of Samaria introduced Baal worship; Jehu of Samaria restored the worship of the calves; Solomon built high places to false gods on Olivet; and Ahaz had gone still further.

images of stone will be shattered in pieces; all the gifts presented to the idol temples, from the money gained by lewdness, will be burned with fire,¹ and the site of its idol statues will I make desolate. For by the pay of harlots they came, and they shall be carried off² to grace the harlot temples of Assyria.

"At the thought of this I beat my breast, and wail and howl; I go stripped and barefoot;³ I wail like the jackals and roar like the ostriches! For her wounds are mortal; they reach even to Judah; to the gate of my own people, to Jerusalem! Tell it not in Gath! weep not in Acre.⁴ In Beth-haphra⁵ roll yourselves for sorrow in the dust. Go forth, ye people of Saphir,⁶ naked even to shame; ye inhabitants of Zaanan,⁷ go not out of your town to mourn at Beth-ezel, for its own grief denies you a shelter. The inhabitant of Maroth⁸ trembles for his goods, for evil has come down from Jehovah to the gate of Jerusalem! Bind the chariot to the swift horse, ye people of Lachish, to flee from the enemy! Ye were the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion; for in you, first, were found the transgressions of Israel!⁹

"Therefore wilt thou, O Judah, be forced to give up Moresheth of Gath as a treaty-gift to the foe.¹⁰ The houses of Achzib¹¹ will prove a lie to the kings of Judah;¹² they will pass away from

¹ Knobel thinks the gifts were not those made to idols, but the wealth of the city.

² They were probably those of silver and gold. Hos. xiii. 2. See Dan. i. 2. 2 Sam. viii. 11. Jos., *Ant.*, X. xi. 1.

³ *Sept.* 2 Sam. xv. 30; Isa. xx. 2.

⁴ *De Wette. Ewald, Kleinert. Knobel.* Acre = the weeping places.

⁵ The dusty place.

⁶ The lovely town.

⁷ Going forth.

⁸ Bitterness.

⁹ Diestel supposes this refers to the sun horses and sun chariots introduced to Jerusalem from Lachish, whither they had come from the northern kingdom. 2 Kings xxiii. 11. But it may refer to idolatry generally.

¹⁰ *Kleinert.*

¹¹ Achzib = winter torrent or "deceitful." A Nachal Achzib is a deceitful brook: that is, one that dries up in summer and disappoints the thirsty traveller.

¹² A place so far south that the Edomites repeatedly took it. Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. ix. 1.

them like the dried up brooks of summer. A conqueror will I bring to thee, O inhabitant of Maresheh;¹ the great men of Israel shall flee even as far as Adullam² to hide in its caves! Cut off thy locks, O daughter of Zion, make thy head bare in sorrow for the sons of thy joy; make broad thy baldness like that of the vulture;³ for they are gone forth into captivity from thee!"

Having proclaimed the judgments impending on Judah, the prophet, in the second chapter, denounces the prevailing wickedness, and predicts a fate like that of Samaria. He also exposes the deceptive promises of the false prophets.

"Woe to them⁴ that plot iniquity, and contrive evil on their beds, to carry it out with the first morning light, because they can do so! They covet fields and take them by violence; houses, and seize them; they oppress the poor man and his house; the prosperous man and his inheritance.

"Therefore thus says Jehovah: 'Behold, I purpose evil against this race; evil from which you shall not remove your necks. Ye shall not then walk any longer haughtily, for it shall be a time of evil!'

"In that day shall they raise a song of derision against you, and wail a lament for you, saying 'All is over with us;' 'we are utterly spoiled; the mighty God⁵ has taken back the inheritance of my people. 'How has He torn mine from me! He has given our fields to the foe!' Thus no one will henceforth

¹ Mareshah—"conquered village." The play on the names throughout is very characteristic of Hebrew oratory and poetry.

² Mareshah and Adullam (labyrinth) would be filled with the fugitive Hebrews, fleeing before the Assyrians. In 1 Chron. iv. 39-41, it is said that various heads of clans among the Simeonites fled into the south of Judah in the reign of Hezekiah.

³ Shaving the head was the sign of mourning. Job i. 20. Jer. vii. 29. In Deut. xiv. 1 it was forbidden to shave the forehead. The Eastern vulture is bald, not the eagle, as in the English version.

⁴ Micah ii. 1.

⁵ They hardly dare name Him. Amos vi. 19.

stretch the measuring cord for thee, O man of Judah, to set apart for thee a portion in the congregation of Jehovah!¹

“Stop your prophesying,”² cry they; ‘you shall no longer prophesy respecting such things,’³ nor shall we hear such evil speaking.’⁴ What a thing to say, O House of Jacob? Does Jehovah act thus from impatience or revenge? Will your calamity be of His doing and not rather from your sins?⁵ ‘Are not my words friendly,’ says He, ‘to him that walks uprightly?’ But now have My people run as foes against Me. Ye strip the mantle⁷ from the fugitive who has escaped from the Assyrians, and is making his way to the south, having left war behind. The very women of My people, who have fled hither from the enemy, and seek shelter for a time, ye have driven forth from the peaceful homes they had formed. Ye have forced them to go to other peoples for safety, and have thus cut them off for ever from My glory.⁸ Up! and begone, for this land will no longer be your rest; it is foul with your offences; it is plague-stricken, and shall be utterly waste.’

“If a false and designing man say ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and strong drink,’ this people take him for their prophet. ‘I, Jehovah,’ says he, ‘will gather thee all, O Jacob, I will

¹ They would have no measured lot of ground in the land, as they had had heretofore.

² The word used is from the verb “to drop,” as the dew or rain, and refers to the words dropping from the lips. Kleinert makes it mean “foam not at the mouth,”—“foam they.”

³ The affairs of the great.

⁴ A paraphrase.

⁵ Eichhorn translates thus: “‘Prophesy not,’ say they; ‘let *these* prophesy’ (alluding to false prophets). And then the prophet answers ‘If they do not prophesy, your shame and punishment will not be removed.’”

⁶ *Hitzig*. Emendation. The following lines are a paraphrase.

⁷ Two kinds of upper clothing are mentioned, the Salmah = the Haik or the Abba of modern Arabs, a large square blanket or sheet—and the Eder, a special kind of mantle, of sheepskin among the poor. *Leyrer*, in *Herzog*, vol. vii. p. 27.

⁸ Among the heathen they were far from the temple and the knowledge of Jehovah.

⁹ Ibn Ezra, *Hitzig*, *Struensee*, J. D. Michaelis, Tholuck, Kleinert,

surely bring together again the remnant of Israel ; I will bring all into one, like sheep into their fold ; like a flock in its pasture ; till both fold and wide pasture teem with men. And He that is mighty¹ will go before them, and will force their way through every obstacle, and they will flood through the gate of their house of bondage, and stream forth through it. Their King will go before them ; even Jehovah at their head.”²

Such were the delusions set before the people by the false prophets, but Jehovah, through His true servants, spoke in a very different strain.

“So these men talk, but thus do I, Jehovah, speak to you: ‘Give ear, O ye heads of Jacob ;³ ye princes of the House of Israel !⁴ Is it not your part to keep to what is right ? But ye hate what is good and love what is evil. Ye take the very skin off My people, and the flesh from their bones ; ye eat the flesh of My people and flay off their skin ; ye hew their bones and cut them in pieces as for the pot, and as flesh for the cauldron !’ In the day of wrath you shall cry to Jehovah, but He will not hear you ; He will hide His face from you in that time, because your deeds are evil !

“Thus saith Jehovah concerning the false prophets that lead astray My people ; who, as long as they have food in their teeth, cry ‘Peace,’ and foretell prosperity, but declare him who does not put meat in their mouths an enemy of God. For this, a night shall come over you in which ye shall have no vision ; darkness in which ye shall not divine ; the sun shall go down over these prophets, and the day over them shall be dark !⁵ Then shall the seers blush red ; the diviners be covered with shame ; they shall

Ewald and others agree that what follows is the utterance of the false prophet.

¹ The expected Messiah.

² Their ancient limits will be too small for the re-united twelve tribes.

³ Micah iii.

⁴ These names must apply to Judah after Samaria had fallen.

⁵ Their false predictions will be disappointed by the political night that will fall on the nation, and by the rebuke given them thus from above.

all cover the lip, because no answer to their predictions comes from God!

"But *I* am filled with power by the Spirit of Jehovah; filled with uprightness and manly boldness, to tell Jacob his transgression and Israel his sin!"¹

"O hear this, ye heads of the House of Jacob, ye princes of the House of Israel, who have a hatred of the right, and make crooked everything just; who think to build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem by unrighteousness. You chiefs give judgment for reward; you priests, who should freely teach the law, pervert it for hire;² you who style yourselves prophets divine for money. And yet you appeal to Jehovah and say, 'Is not Jehovah among us; no evil can touch us!'

"Therefore, on your account, Zion shall be ploughed as a field, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins, and the temple hill be turned to a wooded height!"³

Such a prophecy respecting the temple, already the object of superstitious veneration, was fitted to rouse the fiercest passions of the hearers, as far gentler words, in later times, kindled the popular fury against our Lord

¹ How clearly this reveals the bitter opposition he had to bear.

² Lit. "prophecy" or "teach," but, it is implied, unfaithfully.

³ The word used is Ya'ar, the modern "Wa'ar" of the fellahin dialect, by which they indicate the pathless, rocky, unenclosed, barren wilds of brushwood which cover many of the Palestine hills. Thus in Eccles. ii. 6, where Solomon is introduced saying that "he made him pools of water, to water therewith the wood," etc.—it should be—"the rough mountain forest," etc. In fact he had cascades, or pools, falling from ledge to ledge, to water forest trees, etc., planted by him in picturesque heights.* It was in a Ya'ar that Jonathan found the honey; dripping apparently from a cleft in the rocks; the favourite resort of wild bees.† Here, the hill of Zion is to become a Ya'ar, and the neglected thickets on its sides even now attest the truth of the prophecy. See *Neil*, pp. 205-7.

* Eccles. ii. 6.

† Sam. xiv. 27.

and St. Stephen. Micah, therefore, forthwith soothes the mind of his audience by telling them :

"Yet,¹ in days to come,² the mountain of the House of Jehovah shall be established as the highest³ of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow to it. The heathen multitudes shall set out to it, saying to each other, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah; to the House of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' For the Lord God shall go forth from Zion; the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And God will judge between many nations; He will give decisions between strong peoples afar off. Then will they beat their swords into ploughshares; and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Every one will then sit under His vine and under His fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid; the mouth of Jehovah of Hosts has spoken it."⁴

Kindled by the thought of this glorious future, the prophet now builds on it his sure hope that God will one day bring back the captives of His race to their own land, and restore their glory. Under their king, the great Messiah, they shall triumph over all their foes. Doubtless they fancied a political and worldly splendour, but the Anointed of God was to be a spiritual king, and His dominion that of the true theocracy. Meanwhile the people, touched by the glorious picture the prophet has drawn, enthusiastically welcome the prospect.

¹ Micah iv.

² Lit. "at the end of days."

³ *Hitzig*. Not on the top of other mountains. It shall be reckoned the most glorious of all mountains.

⁴ Ewald makes the words ending here, a quotation, beginning with "Come let us." This picture of peace in the happy future of the world passed, through the Jewish Sybilline verses, and possibly from the writings of the prophets themselves, to the Roman poets. *Virg., Georg.*, i. 507. *Ovid., Fasti*, i. 699. *Martial*, xiv. 34.

“‘Let other nations,’ say they, ‘walk every one in the name of their god; we shall walk in the name of Jehovah, our God, for ever and ever.’”

The prophet then resumes :—

“In that day, says Jehovah, I will gather the lame, and assemble the far scattered; the race that I have afflicted; and I will make the lame into a remnant; those driven out into a strong nation; and Jehovah will reign over them in Mount Zion, from henceforth, for ever.

“And thou, O Ophel,¹ the tower of the flocks, the hill of the daughter of Zion; to thee shall thy former dominion return; the kingdom shall come back to the daughter of Jerusalem!

“But now, wherefore dost thou raise a great cry? Is there no longer a king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? Is this why trembling has seized thee, like a woman in travail?

“Tremble, indeed, and be in pain, like a woman in travail, O daughter of Zion. For, truly thou must now go forth from thy city, and dwell in the field, and come even to Babylon.² But there thou shalt be delivered; there will Jehovah deliver thee from the hand of thine enemies!³

“Even now many heathen peoples have gathered themselves against thee,⁴ and say, ‘We shall defile Zion by the blood we shall shed in her; our eyes shall have their desire on her.’

“But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah; they do not understand His counsel—that He has gathered them to be themselves trodden under foot, like sheaves on the threshing floor!

“‘Up, and thresh them, O daughter of Zion’—says Jehovah—‘for I will make thy horn iron; thy hoofs brass; thou shalt

¹ *Kleinert.* Ophel was the hill to the south of Zion, and part of the Holy City. The flocks of the citizens may have been driven to it for shelter from a foe; or the citizens themselves might be regarded as a flock guarded by this watch-tower.

² At this time the kingdom of Babylon was yet in the distant future. Assyria was still in its glory, with Babylon as its dependency.

³ How wonderful this prophecy.

⁴ The Assyrians, under whose standards many nations served.

crush to pieces many peoples,¹ and offer up their spoil to Jehovah; their treasures to the Lord of the whole earth! Gather now in troops,² thou daughter of many sons!³ They will presently lay siege against us; they will, as it were, smite the ruler of Israel on the cheek with a staff."⁴

Yet, God has not forgotten His people. A great deliverer—the Messiah King—will appear to raise up again the theocracy. Till now the prophets had predicted only his descent from David. Micah goes further and names the very place from which He is to come.

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah; small though thou be among the thousands⁵ of Judah, out of thee shall come forth for Me a Ruler over Israel, whose going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."⁶

"But He will deliver them up to their adversity till she that beareth has brought forth—till Bethlehem has seen this Messiah Prince born. Then shall the remnant of His brethren, still in exile, return to those of the children of Israel who remain

¹ The figure is from the oxen treading the threshing floor. Their feet break the straw into fine fragments, in which condition it becomes the special fodder of all domestic beasts in Palestine. It is called Teben.

² Micah. v. 1.

³ Paraphrase. A difficult expression.

⁴ The Assyrians were about to attack Jerusalem. Sargon says he "subdued the land of Judah." This must have been in 711 or 710. Layard's *Inscriptions*, pl. xxxiii. 8.

⁵ The districts comprising 1,000 of a population. A counterpart of our hundreds. Ewald, Noyes, and Eichhorn translate the words "too small be reckoned amongst thee," etc.

⁶ *Vulgate*. So *Luther*. *Ewald*, "whose origin is from of old, from the most ancient days." *De Wette*, "from of old—from the days of the foretime." *Noyes*, "from the ancient age, from the days of old." *Kleinert*, "from the remote past, from the days of the foretime." *Sept.* like the *Vulgate*. The words translated in our Version "from everlasting," are translated in vii. 14, "from of old."

in the Holy Land. He shall stand and rule¹ in the might of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah, His God. Then shall they dwell in security,² for He shall be great even to the ends of the earth. And He shall give peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land; when he treads in our palaces, then shall He raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of the people.³ And they shall devour Assyria with the sword; the land of Nimrod in its gates. Thus shall He deliver from the Assyrian when he comes into our land, and treads within our borders.

"Then will the remnant of Jacob be in the midst of many nations like the fertilizing night-mist⁴ from Jehovah; as the showers upon the grass, which thenceforth grows without waiting for the will of man or tarrying for the sons of men. The residue of Jacob will be among the heathen, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the wood;⁵ as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, when he passes, treads down and tears, no one being able to deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted high above thy oppressors, and all thy enemies shall be destroyed."

In this day of triumph Israel will once more be purged from every defilement. They have trusted in horses and

¹ "Be a shepherd."

² *De Wette. Eichhorn.*

³ An endless number of great leaders will stand at the side of the Messiah Prince to help him.

⁴ Neil strikingly points out that dew, in the strict sense of the word, falls in Palestine only in winter, when it is of little use, as it then rains in tropical torrents. In summer and autumn, when dew is much needed, there is none. The cloudless skies leave no moisture in the air to descend in this form when the earth is cooled at night. In these months, however, a heavy mist is brought each night over the land by the prevailing west winds—the moisture from the Mediterranean—and is condensed into fine rain, which wonderfully revives the parched herbage. It comes about twelve o'clock. To this, so unspeakably grateful in a hot country, Scripture always refers when it uses the word *tal*—translated in our version "dew." The equivalent in Arabic means "the small rain." See *Neil*, p. 138.

⁵ *Ya'ar.* See p. 358.

chariots; in strong cities; in heathen superstitions; in idols; in obscene Asherahs,—but all these will be removed. The people must trust in God alone.

“It shall come to pass in that day,¹ saith Jehovah, that I will take away thy horses from the midst of thee, and destroy thy chariots; I will destroy the fortified cities of thy land, and throw down all thy fortresses;² I will root out the black arts from thy hand, and thou shalt no longer have heathen diviners of the clouds. I will cut off thy graven images and thy idol statues from thy midst, and thou shalt no longer bow down to the work of thy hands. I will pluck up thy Asherahs³ from the midst of thee, and overthrow thy vainly trusted defence.”⁴

Nor will disobedience be suffered any longer :

“I will execute vengeance in anger and in fury on the peoples that have not hearkened to My voice.”

The sixth chapter appears to have been a distinct address, taking the sublime form of a controversy of Jehovah with His people. The book could not open and close with threatenings. True to his office, the prophet hastens to give a clear statement of the means by which all hindrances to the enjoyment of present good, and the fear of future visitations, might be at once removed.

¹ Micah v. 10.

² This paragraph recalls the ancient ideal of Israel as trusting absolutely in Jehovah and rejecting all human aids. Or it pictures the Messianic kingdom as one of permanent peace, in which the defences and inventions of war will no longer be needed.

³ The clinging fondness for the worship of nature and its powers under the symbol of a tree is striking. A green tree in the neighbourhood of Meccah still receives divine honours. Other Arabs venerate a particular date palm as the shrine of an indwelling goddess. In Mukan an ancient elm was worshipped. The Persians in many places do homage to great old trees as abodes of saints, and call them Sheiks or Imâm. See note in *Hitzig*.

⁴ Eichhorn translates, “and destroy thy sacred groves.”

"Hear,¹ ye now what Jehovah says. 'Rouse thyself; carry thy dispute before the mountains; let the hills hear thy voice!'²

"Hear, O ye mountains, the controversy of Jehovah; Hear, ye rocks, the eternal foundations of the earth! For Jehovah has a controversy with His people; He will plead His case with Israel!

"O my people, what evil have I done to you? Wherein have I been grievous to you? Testify against me! I brought thee up from the land of Egypt; I redeemed thee from the land of slavery, and sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam to go before thee. My people, remember what Balak, the king of Moab, devised,³ and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him.⁴ Remember what happened on the way from Shittim to Gilgal,⁵ that ye may know the righteousness of Jehovah! 'Wherewith, asked Balak, 'shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Has Jehovah pleasure in thousands of rams, or in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn as a sin-offering for my offences; the fruit of my body as an atonement for my soul?' But Balaam answered, setting light by the merely outward, 'He hath shown thee, O man, what is good. What does Jehovah ask of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God!'"

Having thus reminded them of the true requirements of Jehovah, the prophet once more denounces the wickedness of Jerusalem and threatens it with Divine wrath.

"The voice of Jehovah calls to the city, and the wise hear

¹ Micah vi. 1.

² Jehovah condescends to plead His cause against Israel; calling the mountains and hills of the land to witness between them; and leaving the people themselves to the verdict of their own hearts. See Josh. xxiv. 27.

³ Heb. yā'atz. In A. V. "counselled," "consulted," "purposed," "devised."

⁴ Such allusions to the Book of Numbers prove conclusively that it must have been known long before Micah's day. See Numbers, chapters xxii. to xxv.

⁵ Thus completed by De Wette.

Thee, O Lord, with awe.¹ Give ear to the threatening and to Him who has appointed it! Are there not yet in the houses of the wicked, unrighteous treasures, and the hateful false² measure? Is he pure who has false balances, and a girdle purse³ of deceitful weights⁴? Is she pure whose rich men are full of violence, whose inhabitants speak lies, whose tongue in their mouth is deceitful?

"Therefore I will smite thee sorely, and make thee desolate, on account of thy sins. Thou shalt eat and not be satisfied; thine hunger shall still be within thee; thou shalt hide thy precious things but thou shalt not save them from the enemy, and what thou thinkest thou hast saved will I give to the sword. Thou shalt sow but shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives but not anoint thee with oil; and the grapes, yet not drink the wine! For you keep the statutes of Omri;⁵ you follow all the works of the House of Ahab, and walk in their counsels. Therefore I will make thee, Jerusalem, a desolation,⁶ and thy inhabitants a derision, and thou shalt bear the reproach of the nations.⁷

Grief at the fallen glory of his people—full of guilt and moral decay—overpowers the prophet, and he breaks into a lament over the small number of righteous men left.

"Woe is me!⁸ It is with me as at the gleanings of summer fruit; and at the gleaning of the vintage; there is no cluster left to cut; no early fig which my soul desireth.⁹ The good man has perished from the land; there are no longer any

¹ *Eichhorn*. Noyes says, "And the man of wisdom will discern thee." Ewald, "And verily it is salvation to fear Thy name." Hitzig, "Wisdom fears thy name."

² Oversmall ephah.

³ Light weights were generally carried in a purse in the girdle. Prov. vii. 20; xvi. 11. Isa. xlvi. 6. The word is lit. "girdle."

⁴ Lit. "stones." See also Lev. xix. 36. Deut. xxv. 13. 2 Sam. xiv. 26. Prov. xi. 1. Zech. v. 8.

⁵ See p. 45.

⁶ Lit. "astonishment."

⁷ *Sept.*

⁸ Micah. vii. 1.

⁹ No good man left, such as my soul yearns to find.

upright left among men! All lie in wait to shed blood; every one weaves plots against his brother. Both their hands are eagerly given to do evil; the prince is bought; the judge gives decisions for a bribe; the great man tells him what his soul desires, and, together, they extort it from the falsely accused.¹ The best of them is like a brier; the most upright like a hedge of thorns, to the honest and poor.

"But, O Lord, the day Thy seers have predicted; the day of Thy visitation cometh; then shall their confusion follow!

"Depend not on a friend; put no confidence in a trusted one; keep thy lips, the doors of thy mouth, from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son will betray the father; the daughter stand up against her mother; the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's foes will be his own household."²

But the prophet will not leave his people to despair. He sees Judah and Jerusalem hereafter penitent, and puts words of faith and returning love to God in their lips.

"As for me," says he, in the name of Jerusalem and Judah, "I will look to Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me! Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; though I have fallen I will arise: though I now sit in darkness, Jehovah will be my light! I will bear the wrath of Jehovah, for I have sinned against Him, till He plead my cause, and give judgment for me again; till He bring me forth to the light, and I behold His righteousness. Then, she³ that is my enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her who said to me, 'Where is Jehovah, thy God? My eyes shall feed on her;'⁴ she will be trodden down like the mire of the street.'

"A day comes when thy walls, O Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; a day when the decree for thy restoration shall be widely spread!⁵

¹ *Sept.* The great man asks, and the judge speaks soft words to him, and he has what he desires.

² His slaves and dependents. See Matt. x. 21, 35, 36. Luke xii. 53; xxi. 16.

³ The heathen, now so haughty and triumphant.

⁴ Jerusalem.

⁵ Text doubtful.

In that day men shall come to thee from Assyria, and from the cities of Egypt to the river Euphrates, even from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.¹ But the land when they reach it will be desolate, because of the sins of its inhabitants, and as the fruit of their doings.

In that day they shall cry to God :—

“Feed Thy people with Thy shepherd’s staff; the flock of Thine inheritance. Give them to dwell apart in the glades of Carmel; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead,² as in the days of old.”

In answer to this supplication God gives a gracious promise.

“As in the days when thou camest forth from Egypt will I show you marvellous things.

“The heathen shall see it and be afraid of all your might.³ They shall lay their hand on their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like the serpent; they shall creep out of their hiding places, as the crawling serpents creep, terrified, from their holes; they shall tremble before Jehovah our God, and shall fear before Thee!”

The prophet now closes in a burst of adoration :—

“Who is a God like Thee; pardoning iniquity and graciously passing by the transgressions of the remnant of Thy heritage! He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy! He will once more have compassion upon us; He will tread down our misdoings; He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt show the faithfulness to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham,—which Thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old.”

Such were some of the magnificent discourses to which the crowds in Jerusalem listened seven hundred years

¹ From the east and the west; the north and the south.

² Now lost, but then regained.

³ That of restored Israel. Lit. “their.”

before Christ, when the humble huts and cottages, which afterwards became Rome, were still the homes of their first tenants.¹ But Micah was not alone in his outbursts of pathetic or splendid oratory. Audiences in the temple precincts or in the open spaces of the city heard Isaiah also, lifting up his voice as a preacher of righteousness. The twenty-eighth chapter of his prophecies was apparently delivered in the early years of Hezekiah, and vividly brings before us the man and his times. The Egyptian faction² had already sought to break the existing relations with Assyria, and to make a treaty with Pharaoh, but the prophet denounces the folly and peril of their proposal.

Like Micah, he commences by a terrible denunciation of Samaria, which was approaching its fall. The first verses have already been given.³ But the true prophet is a messenger of wrath only that he may introduce promises of mercy, if the lessons be taken to heart. Ephraim, the kingdom of the Ten Tribes must, indeed perish, but—

“In that day,⁴ after Samaria has fallen, Jehovah of Hosts will be a glorious crown and a fair diadem to the remnant of His people;⁵ instead of the withered crown of the glory of Samaria. He will inspire him that sitteth as judge with a spirit of uprightness, and him that turneth back the battle to the gate⁶ with heroic strength.

But Judah as well as Ephraim was in danger by its sins. Widespread drunkenness—a phrase perhaps, including, also, general pride and lawlessness—had destroyed Samaria. It would, also, ruin Judah. For—

¹ Year of foundation of Rome, B.C. 753. ² In Jerusalem.

³ See p. 247.

⁴ Isa. xxviii. 5 ff.

⁵ The reign of Hezekiah showed God, thus, the glorious Head of His people in Judah.

⁶ In the future wars with Philistia and Assyria.

"Even the men of Jerusalem stagger through wine, and reel through strong drink. Priest and false prophet stagger through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they reel through strong drink; they stagger as they announce their visions; they reel as they give forth their oracles and judgments. All their tables are covered with drunken vomit; there is not a clean spot on them left."

But such reproaches were bitterly resented:—

"'Whom,' say they, 'will he thus teach knowledge, and whom would he make to understand his (so-called) revelations? Are we babes just weaned from the milk, and taken from the breasts? For he gives us command on command; command on command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; a word here, a word there.'"¹

Isaiah, however, has his answer ready:—

"Yes, it shall be as you say: the same thing over and over; Jehovah will still speak to this people as heretofore; but as they mock me with stammering lips, it shall be through the stammering lips and strange tongue of the Assyrians² that He will punish them; not as till now, in gentleness and love. He has told them through His own prophets their wise course; the true rest to the weary land and its true refreshment; but they would not hear.³ Henceforth, therefore, the word of Jehovah to them will indeed be, as ye say, 'Command on command, command on command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; a word here, and a word

¹ Eichhorn translates this passage spiritedly: "Whom can such men teach wisdom; to whom can they give instruction? Men who talk like children just weaned, like children just taken from the breast—Zav Lazav, Zav Lazav, Kav Lakav, Kav Lakav—here and there, half broken words." That is, they could only speak with the broken imperfection of drunken men. The untranslated words are those of the Hebrew text.

² The Assyrian language was "stammering" and barbarous to the Jews. Though closely allied to the Hebrew, it sounded, in comparison, as Low German would to a High German, or Midland English to a Southern Englishman.

³ The prophets had counselled peace with Assyria; the avoidance of relations with Egypt, and above all, faithful obedience to Jehovah.

there'; but it will be no longer to save this people, but to bring on them their merited punishment; that as they go on their own way they may fall backwards and be broken, and snared and taken captive.

"Therefore, hear ye the Word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, who rule this people of Jerusalem! Because ye say in your hearts, 'We have no fear; we have made a covenant with Death, and an agreement with the kingdom of the grave¹ by magic arts and oracles; they will not touch us; the overflowing scourge of war, when it floods the land, shall not reach us, for we have, with lying and deceit, made a secret treaty with Egypt² for protection. This lying will be our refuge; under falsehood will we hide.' Therefore thus saith the Lord, Jehovah, 'Behold I am He who has laid a foundation stone³ in Zion; a tried stone; a precious, deep-laid, corner stone;⁴ He who believeth shall not think of fleeing away.⁵ But, as a builder uses the line and the plummet, so I shall use justice for a line and righteousness for a plummet

¹ Sheol.

² Isaiah xxviii. 15.

³ The enormous size and cost of the foundation stones of Eastern buildings is to be remembered. Thus 1 Kings v. 17, "Great stones, costly stones, hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the house."

⁴ "The true seed of David, manifest in Jesus Christ." *Delitzsch*. Cheyne thinks it refers to Jehovah. Hitzig says, "The prophet means that the fabric of the Jewish State will not be held up by the human means of defence on which some trusted, but by the sacred city (as the habitation of Jehovah). The Syrians and Israelites had failed to overthrow it (vii. 1) and so, also, would the Assyrians." But the interpretation of *Delitzsch* seems best. The sure corner stone of the Jewish State, to keep it from sinking, was undoubtedly Jehovah, but that of the spiritual theocracy—the Church or Messianic kingdom, is Jehovah, in Christ Jesus.

⁵ Those who trust in Jehovah will feel that Jerusalem, under His protection, is as secure as is the temple, resting on its immoveable foundation stone. This is the primary allusion; the higher is that the Church, resting on the Messiah Prince, is as immoveable as the temple was of old. The stone is laid in Zion as a sign that the Messiah will be of the stock of David, to whom Zion was, as it were, sacred.

in dealing with the men of Jerusalem, and the hail of my judgment shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the torrents of My wrath shall flood out the hiding place of the scoffers, and your league with Death will be annulled, and your agreement with the Grave shall not stand; your black arts, and spells, and conjurations will be of as little good to you as they were to the men of Samaria. When the overflowing scourge of the Assyrian armies shall pass through the land, ye shall be trodden down by it. As soon as its flood comes it will take you with it. Day after day it will pass through, from morning to night; the Word of Jehovah at which ye now mock, will then, when uttered in deeds, be an unmingled terror!

“For the bed you have made for yourselves is too short for one to stretch himself on it, and the covering too narrow to wrap one’s self in it. For Jehovah will rise up as He once did at Mount Perazim.¹ He will rouse Himself as at the valley of Gibeon,¹ to do His work—a work new and strange to Him, the God of mercy—and to carry out His task—a task unheard of before.²

“Now, therefore, be no longer scoffers at my words—thinking to seek help from Egypt and to betray Assyria—lest the bondage in which you now stand, as tributary to the Great King, be made still harder; for there has been revealed to me from Jehovah of Hosts a decree of destruction, not to be recalled, on the whole land.

“Give ear, and hear my voice; attend, and hear my speech; Take a lesson from the tiller of the land as to the moral government of God. Is the ploughman always ploughing in order to sow? Is he always opening and breaking the clods of the field? When he has levelled the soil does he not scatter the fennel flower,³ and

¹ Josh. x. 10, 12. 2 Sam. v. 20, 25. 1 Chron. xiv. 16. See vol. iii. p. 209.

² It might be natural to visit the heathen with judgment, but to chastise His own people thus!

³ The word Kitzakh, translated fitches, or vetches, is perhaps, the fennel flower. It is an annual, about a foot high, with bluish flowers. Its capsules contain numerous black seeds which are sold in the bazaars of Palestine and Egypt, chiefly to season bread, either before, or after it is baked. To use a threshing sledge for such a frail plant would have been monstrous. See W. Carruthers, F.R.S., in *Bible Educator*, vol. i. p 36. Instead of fennel

cast abroad the cummin,¹ and sow the wheat in the best spots;² the barley in its appointed places, and spelt³ along the edges of the field? Thus his God rightly instructs him, and gives him knowledge. In like manner must not Jehovah work in due time, order, and mode? Human affairs are guided by Him according to rules as fixed, and with unerring wisdom and power. Let the careless and the mockers fear His judgments, which, also, have their place in His Providence, and are coming on apace!"

"Yet in these very judgments God acts differently with different classes, as the farmer does in the threshing of his crops. For the fennel flower is not threshed with a threshing sledge;⁴ the heavy threshing wheel is not rolled over the cummin; but the fennel flower is beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a flail. Is the precious bread corn trampled to nought on the threshing floor? Nay; the farmer does not keep on threshing it, or drive his threshing wheel, and his horses, over it, for ever. To do so would be to destroy that which he values most. This lesson also comes from Jehovah of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom."

flower, Mr. Neil says, "Ketzakh is a kind of rape seed, grown for oil, still known by this name in Palestine, and still beaten out in the same way." *Neil*, p. 231.

¹ Cummin is a plant somewhat like fennel. Anise, carraway, and coriander belong to the same family. Cummin was, as the text shows, cultivated in ploughed fields by the ancient Jews. Its seeds have a bitterish warm taste, with an aromatic flavour. It was used as a condiment. *Dict. of the Bible*. ² Ewald.

³ Not rye, which is a northern variety of grain unknown in Palestine.

⁴ Threshing is performed in the East, in the open air. Oxen, generally, are driven round a ring heaped with the grain, and at once tread out the contents of the ears and break the straw into small soft pieces (*teben*), which in this form is the principal food of live stock in Palestine and elsewhere.* Threshing sledges armed underneath with iron teeth or sharp stones, and drawn by cattle or horses, are also sometimes driven round over the grain, the thresher often standing on the sledge to increase its power. One form of this sledge has rollers below—the "cart wheel" of the text.

* It is universally used in Central Asia. See p. 361.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE EGYPTIAN PARTY IN JERUSALEM.

THE fall of Samaria had alarmed Jerusalem and strengthened the influential party in it who, contrary to the counsel of the prophets, desired an alliance with Egypt, as a defence against Assyria.¹ Their policy was shortsighted, and misleading. The duplicity of Egypt, in withholding promised aid,² had led to the ruin of the northern kingdom. But the Nile power was able to delude the populations of Palestine, even after this exposure of its hollow faithlessness. The eyes of many of the Jewish aristocracy still turned to the Pharaoh as the hope of their country in its peril.

The year 720, the second after the fall of Samaria, was hence marked by another great uprising of the nations of Palestine and Southern Syria, instigated by the wily diplomacy of the Egyptian court. Hamath once more revolted, and the flames of rebellion spread south as far as the country of the Philistines. Unfortunately for the success of this renewed struggle for national life, Sargon³

¹ Hosea xii. 1.

² Isaiah xxxvi. 6.

³ The name of Sargon, which occurs in Isaiah xx. 1, had been lost for ages till recovered on the Assyrian monuments. He was supposed to be identical with Shalmaneser, Sennacherib or Esarhaddon. The verse of Isaiah was the only known evidence of his existence, and had been so for twenty-five centuries. Yet, when

had already crushed the brave Merodach Baladan at Babylon, and was free to turn his arms to the west. The tramp of his armies and the roll of his chariots were soon, therefore, again heard in the defiles of Lebanon and in the valley of the Orontes. A bold patriot had seized the throne of Hamath and had induced the crushed but not dispirited populations of Arpad, Damascus, Samaria, and Palestine generally, to join him; the king of Egypt renewing his promise of aid. But Sargon was too rapid in his movements for the Egyptian prince. Pressing on with a powerful host, he forced Itabihid, the new king of Hamath, to throw himself into the city of Gargar, afterwards known as Aroer, "the place of ruins."¹ There, however, he was besieged and taken prisoner by Sargon; ending his brief dream of royalty sadly, for he was mercilessly flayed alive by his captor. The city having been committed to the flames, terrible punishments were inflicted on the inhabitants. Hamath was stripped of more of its leading citizens, and 4,300 Assyrians left in their place as colonists; the district being put under an Assyrian governor.²

The conqueror then swept on to the south, punishing the remaining population of the northern kingdom, and invading Judah, which, under Hezekiah, prudently followed the counsel of Isaiah, and kept as neutral as possible. By this time Egypt had roused itself to action and marched to the support of Hanun, king of Gaza, one

the stones of the Assyrian mounds were uncovered, it was found that Isaiah was right, and that Sargon had been one of the greatest kings of Nineveh.

¹ Gesenius, *Thes.*

² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 94. Schrader, in *Riehm*, gives 714 as the date of the campaign, but this does not agree with his march towards Egypt in 720.

of the Palestine league, as far as Raphia, twenty miles south of Gaza,¹ near the coast, on the road to Pelusium. Here, however, the joint Philistine and Egyptian armies were defeated in a decisive battle. Raphia itself was forthwith burned to the ground; Gaza taken, and its king carried off to Assyria, with many of his people.²

For the next eleven years Palestine breathed freely, as the Assyrians were too busy, elsewhere, to invade it during the long interval from 720 to 711, though their garrisons remained in the principal conquered towns. Affairs in the east demanded Sargon's undivided attention. The Hittite empire, which had at one time stretched from Asia Minor to the Euphrates, had already been weakened by repeated defeats,³ and virtually broken up; its capital, Carchemish, "the Fort of Chemosh," a rich and populous city, commanding the ordinary central passage over the Euphrates, at the junction of that river with the Chaboras, had been taken, and part of its inhabitants carried off. The dominion of a race which from early ages had ruled far and wide and had resisted with success even the power of the great Rameses II. of Egypt, was thus finally broken, though despairing struggles marked the next few years. Who these Hittites were is a question still undecided, though their pictures on the Egyptian monuments, with their shaven heads, only one lock on the crown remaining, and their wicker shields, remind us of Tartar or at least Turanian customs.

But, though Carchemish⁴ had fallen, other foes were astir. An empire held together only by force had no coherency, and was permanently, in one part or other, in revolt. Victory still, however, followed the standards of

¹ Kiepert's *Map*. ² Smith's *Assyria*, p. 95. ³ In 717.

⁴ The site of Carchemish was discovered by George Smith. It is that of the present town of Jerablus, the old Hierapolis.

Sargon. Nation after nation in the east was triumphantly subdued, and great deportations of their inhabitants made fresh insurrection more difficult.¹ Syria and Phenicia received large numbers of colonists from the campaign of 719; and in 715 fresh bands of prisoners from various countries were added to the foreign population of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes.² Far and wide the Great King saw his glory extending. The queen of conquered races in Northern Arabia sent gifts to him in sign of homage, and even the Pharaoh humbled himself to buy peace by paying tribute.³ The seal of a treaty concluded between Egypt and Assyria about this time has been found in the archives of Kouyunjik, one of the divisions of ancient Nineveh.⁴ It was not, however, till the year 711 that Sargon had stamped out the rebellion of his eastern provinces and crushed such other kingdoms as his lust of conquest induced him to attack. Burning cities, slaying, carrying off captives and plunder, on an imperial scale, at last made him supreme. He had desolated wide regions and called it peace.

But the long respite from war had given Syria and Palestine time to recover themselves, and the national

¹ The statement in 2 Kings xvii. 6, that after the fall of Samaria, Sargon placed many of its people in the cities, or as the Greek reads, the mountains of the Medes, is illustrated by a passage in the Great King's annals, in which he says, that having overrun a large part of Media he seized many of its towns, and annexed them to Assyria,—which would necessitate the bringing citizens from a distance.

² Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 318.

³ Schrader, p. 318. *Smith*, p. 100. *Maspero*, p. 300.

⁴ *Birch*, p. 165. Lenormant says it is part of the treaty made between Sibahi or Schabaka, suzerain of Egypt, and Hanun, king of Gaza, before the battle of Raphia, and that it shows part of both their seals. *L'Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 355, ed. of 1882.

spirit was not yet extinct. Nor was Egypt willing to resign its independence, or to continue tributary to Sargon. Her ancient fame was still a power among the nations of Palestine, and she once more used it to stir up a wide revolt against Assyria. A league of the Philistines, Moab, Edom, and other kingdoms was formed, on which Hezekiah seems to have looked favourably. Egypt undertook to assist the confederates, though she never really did so. As in the past, they were "leaning on the stalk of a bruised papyrus reed,"¹ when they trusted the princes of the Nile Valley.

The years immediately before 711 had been busy with these plottings and preparations. Intense excitement must have prevailed through all the subject races of Palestine. In Jerusalem the most vigorous measures of defence were taken. The city walls were everywhere strengthened; towers were raised on them, and they were provided with warlike machines.² "The Mountain Castle," or Hill of Zion, was cut off by a ditch,³ and the rock scarped to hinder escalade.⁴ The houses near the walls were pulled down, to prevent their giving shelter to an enemy. A census of the population was also taken,⁵ to ascertain the force available in case of extremity, and arms of all kinds were provided in abundance. Jerusalem, since David's time, had extended chiefly to the east and north-east.⁶ Jotham had begun a wall, afterwards completed by Manasseh, enclosing the southern spur of the temple hill known as Ophel, and the springs

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 21.

² The words "raised it to the towers," 2 Chron. xxxii. 5, may mean either or both these preparations. I have included the two.

³ Jos., *Ant.*, VII. iii. 1. Isa. xxii. 11.

⁴ The scarped rock is still seen. Conder's *Handbook*, p. 336.

⁵ Isa. xxii. 8-11.

⁶ Conder, p. 338.

which supplied the city with water. Hezekiah now determined to close up their natural outlet, so as to prevent their being used by an enemy, and brought the stream within the walls by a conduit running westward from Gihon to a new pool¹ which still conveys water to the Pool of Siloam, and is connected by a rock-cut shaft with the ancient wall of Ophel.² An older reservoir, a little south of Siloam, was also utilized;³ this being the *lower*, as the other was the *upper* pool⁴ of the sacred narrative. The energy which could thus “dig the hard rock with iron, and make pools for waters”⁵ boded well for the future, and spoke loudly for the vigour of the king.

But even an Oriental ruler has limits to his power. Shebna, the prefect of the palace,⁶ perhaps a foreigner, and apparently a man of low origin—as his father’s name is not stated—had risen to inordinate authority, which he used with overbearing tyranny and pride.⁷ He had built a great tomb for himself within the city,⁸ as if he were of royal blood, and his chariots and state were the wonder of the inhabitants.⁹ He was one of the prominent leaders of the aristocratic party who opposed Isaiah and his fellow prophets; a representative, and, as far as he dared, a patron of the old heathen party.¹⁰ He was devoted, moreover, to the policy of an Egyptian alliance, which the prophets denounced and the king seems to

¹ 2 Kings xx. 20.

² 2 Chron. xxxii. 4, 30. Eccclus. xlviii. 17.

³ Isa. xxii. 11.

⁴ Isa. xxii. 9; xxxvi. 2.

⁵ Eccclus. xlviii. 17.

⁶ Isa. xxii. 15.

⁷ His successor was to be very different from him, and was thus to earn the name of a “father” of the people.

⁸ Isa. xxii. 16.

⁹ Isa. xxii. 18.

¹⁰ See the name “Servant of Jehovah,” given to Eliakim in contrast to him. Isa. xxii. 20.

have disliked. He and his supporters were on many grounds the object of Isaiah's stern antipathy. They had retained their gold and silver idols and their pillars of Astarte, in their gardens, in spite of Hezekiah.¹ They clamoured for a refusal of the Assyrian tribute, fancying it could be done safely by the help of Egypt. If they could not get troops thence, they hoped for chariots and horses. Meanwhile, they defied the prophets, and drove them by threats and harshness to seek safety in concealment.² Before leaders and princes of the people, thus powerful and corrupt,³ the loftiest courage and self-sacrificing devotion alone could make a stand.

But Isaiah was equal to the occasion. He feared no man's face when he had a message to deliver to his fellow-citizens, from God. Shebna and the princes might threaten; the people might be hostile; his voice rose calm above all opposition, witnessing for his convictions and urging his inspired commission. Making his way to the presence of Shebna himself, he denounced him to his face.

"Hear what Jehovah says to thee,"⁴ he broke out, with fierce abruptness, before the astonished vizier. "What right have you here, and whom do you hope to bury here, in this holy city, that you have hewn out for yourself, in the hill side, a stately sepulchre; as if you and your family were royal—a sepulchre hewn in the top of the mount; as if you would hereafter look proudly down on the city at your feet? What have you to do here, that you have quarried out an everlasting habitation in the rocks?"

"Behold, Jehovah will hurl thee violently away, O man! He will surely seize you and roll you up like a ball, and hurl you, as from a sling, into a wide land. There you shall die, and thither your splendid chariots shall be carried off: thou shame of thy

¹ Isa. i. 29; ii. 8; x. 10; xxxi. 7. Micah v. 12, 13.

² Isa. xxx. 10, 20.

³ Micah iii. 8.

⁴ Isa. xxii. 15-25.

lord's house! I will drive you from your station, and pull you down from your high place, says Jehovah!

"And it shall come to pass in that day that I, Jehovah, will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, and clothe him with your robe of office, and put on him your official girdle, and commit your authority into his hand, and he will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, which you have not been, and to the House of Judah. And I will lay on his shoulder the official key of the House of David, which you have borne,—the key of the palace. What he opens or permits, no man shall shut or forbid,¹ and what he shuts, no man shall open; for his authority shall be supreme. And he shall not be cast out like you, but I will establish him in his office as a man drives a peg into a sure place. The dignity of his father's house shall have its glorious seat in him. On him shall rest all its honour; its humbler and higher branches will hang on him, as the small vessel, the costly goblet and the mean flagon hang from the sure pin.

"In that day, says Jehovah of Hosts, shall you, who hitherto have been a peg driven into a sure place, be removed, cut down and fall, and those that depended on you shall come to the ground, for Jehovah has said it."

How long an interval elapsed before Shebna's disgrace, is not told, but the prophet's words were soon verified, for we next find Shebna in the lower office of king's scribe.² At what time he was carried to Assyria is unknown, but doubtless this part of the prophecy was literally fulfilled as well as the other.

Meanwhile Isaiah strained every nerve to prevent the secret negotiations with Egypt from being carried out. If earnest inspired eloquence could have saved his country from such a calamity, his must have done so. One oration delivered at this period has happily been preserved.³

"Behold, Jehovah rideth on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt,

¹ See *Lightfoot*, on Matt. xvi. 19.

² Isa. xxxvi. 3, 22; xxxvii. 2.

³ Isa. xix.

and the no-gods of Egypt tremble before Him:¹ the heart of Egypt melts in its bosom. And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians; brother shall fight against brother; neighbour against neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.² And the heart of Egypt will die within her; and I will bring to nought her wisdom, so that they shall have to turn themselves to their no-gods, and to the muttering sorcerers, and to their oracles, and to the magicians. And I shall give up Egypt into the hands of a hard master,³ and a fierce king shall reign over it, says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts.

"And the waters shall fail from the Nile,⁴ and the river dry up and be empty: the branches of the river shall become corrupt, and the canals be emptied and dry. The reed and the flag shall wither. The meadows on the Nile banks, and on the banks of its mouths, and everything sown beside the river shall wither, and vanish, and be no more. Then shall the fishermen lament, and all who cast hook into the Nile grieve, and they that spread nets on the face of the streams pine for want. They that work the fine combed flax, and those that weave white cotton cloths shall grow pale; the rich of the land shall be ruined; the lower classes troubled in heart.

¹ Exod. xii. 12.

² Brugsch gives a list from the memorial stone of Piankhi, the first successful invader of Egypt from the south, of twenty petty kings and satraps among whom Egypt was at this time divided. He adds, "The great kingdom of Egypt was split up into little dependent states, which leant now on Ethiopia, now on Assyria, as each foreign master gained preponderance for the time." *Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 229. These kinglets and satraps, crushed for the time by So, or Schabaka and his successors, were constantly on the outlook to revolt and raise civil war. This, as the prophet says, they hereafter succeeded in doing, to the final ruin of the land.

³ Perhaps an allusion to Sargon's victory of Raphia, 720, or to the conquest by Esarhaddon in 672. He divided the country into twelve small tributary states. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 135. *Assurbanipal*, pp. 15, 16.

⁴ In the civil disturbances great misery was caused by the neglect of the dykes and the consequent failure of irrigation. *Herod.*, ii. 137.

"The princes of Zoan¹ are fools: the sage counsellors² of the Pharaoh give unwise counsel! How can ye each say to the Pharaoh, 'I am a son of the wise; a descendant of ancient kings'?"³ If so, where is their wisdom now? Let them tell thee, O Pharaoh, and make thee know what Jehovah of Hosts has purposed respecting Egypt!

"The princes of Tanis are befooled! the princes of Noph⁴ are deceived! the priests, who are the corner stone of the castes of Egypt have led it astray. Jehovah has put into the heart of Egypt a spirit of folly, so that they lead it astray in all it does, as a drunken man staggers to and fro in his vomit, and neither head nor tail, palm branch or rush—the high nor the low of Egypt—have power to do anything.

"In that day the Egyptians shall be like women, and shall tremble and be terrified at the waving of the arm of Jehovah of Hosts when He swings it over them. And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt; at the mention of its name, Egypt will tremble at the fate which Jehovah of Hosts hangs over it."

But the coming of the Messiah shall bring blessing even to Egypt.

"In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan, and make their vows to Jehovah of Hosts: one shall be called Ir ha heres—the city of the destroyed idols."⁵

¹ Zoan was the seat of a local dynasty, under the Ethiopian kings. These monarchs did not put down the petty kings whom they had found in the country, but ruled as lords paramount. *Lenormant*, vol. ii. p. 350. The utter desolation of the whole district, for ages past—though it was formerly so luxuriantly fertile—is noticed by all travellers. See Ebers' *Durch Gosen*, in the first chapters, *passim*. Also, *H. with Bible*, vol. ii. pp. 26, 27.

² The council of priests. See vol. ii. pp. 19, 131.

³ The priests claimed royal descent.

⁴ *Memphis*.

⁵ Herzfeld, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 446. Five cities means a small part. Hebrew was the sacred language, consecrated to the worship of Jehovah. The Egyptian Jews became so numerous that the Bible was translated into Greek for them. Long before

In that day there shall be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and an obelisk on its border to Jehovah. And it shall be for a sign and a witness to Jehovah of Hosts in Egypt—that when they cry to Jehovah because of their oppressors, He may send them a helper and champion to deliver them. And Jehovah shall make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall own Jehovah in that day, and shall present offerings and gifts, and make vows to Jehovah and perform them.

“Thus Jehovah will smite Egypt; smiting and healing; when they return to Jehovah He will be favourable to them and will heal them.”

In those Messianic days, Assyria, the rival of Egypt, shall be so no longer. Peace will reign between them, for Assyria will be converted to God.

“In that day there shall be an open highway for peaceful intercourse, from Egypt to Assyria; the Assyrians will come to Egypt; the Egyptians shall go to Assyria; and both Egyptians and Assyrians shall do homage to Jehovah. In that day Israel shall be third with Egypt and Assyria in this brotherhood of peace; and, instead of an object of angry contention between them, will be a blessing in the midst of the earth, as the instrument of their reconciliation and of the diffusion of true religion.

“Thus Jehovah of Hosts shall bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, Assyria, the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”

But the voice of the prophet was not always so tender. The plots of Shebna and his party, and the imminent dangers of the time, roused him to fierce and indignant protestations, in which the Egyptian faction in Jerusalem were not spared.

Christ, Egypt had many synagogues. But the prophecy has a fuller reference to the distant future when the kingdom of the Messiah will be universal. When Egypt was conquered by Islam (A.D. 640), the prophecy had been wonderfully fulfilled, for Christianity was largely professed in it.

"Woe to the Lioness of God,"¹ he begins on one occasion,—
 "the Lioness of God—the city² where David fixed his abode!³ Add
 year to year; let the feasts go their round; when the predestined
 time has come I will bring distress on the Lioness of God, and
 there will be sighing and moaning. Still, withal, she shall be to
 me the Lioness of God!

"Yet I will encamp round thee; I will surround thee with
 watch posts,⁴ and raise battering machines against thee. And
 thou shalt speak from the earth; thy words shall come faintly
 from the ground, and thy voice shall rise, hollow, like a ghost's,
 from the earth; thy feeble whisper shall come from the dust.
 And the number of thy foes shall be like fine dust; the host of
 the mighty ones, coming against thee, shall be like the flying
 chaff of the threshing floor, and all this shall come suddenly, in a
 moment."

But in her extremity God will help her.

"But Zion will be saved⁵ by Jehovah of Hosts as with the
 crash of thunder; with earthquake and a great noise; with whirl-
 wind and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire! And as a
 dream, as a vision of the night, shall be the multitude of nations
 that encamp against the Lioness of God; that fight against her
 and her defences, and press her sorely. And as when the hungry
 man dreams that he eats, and on waking finds his mouth empty,
 or as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, and on
 waking is faint, and his soul still craves a draught; so shall it
 be with the multitude of all the heathen who fight against Mount
 Zion!"⁶

There is no need, therefore, to seek human help in
 Egypt or elsewhere. Jehovah, alone, is an all-sufficient
 Protector. The Assyrian will assuredly come, but God
 will destroy him and save Jerusalem and Judah. Yet
 the false prophets and the unfaithful leaders of the people

¹ Isa. xxix.

² Jerusalem.

³ Lit. "encamped."

⁴ *Delitzsch. Knobel. Diestel. Naegelsbach.*

⁵ *Naegelsbach.* Others have, "visited."

⁶ The enemies of Zion shall be disappointed of their prey;
 their attack will be foiled.

have refused to trust in God, and have counselled an Egyptian alliance, which would bring ruin. The prophet has spoken a riddle, he will now explain it.

“Stand wonderstruck and stare, ye people, at what I tell you; shut your eyes and make yourselves blind, by your dull unbelief which understands not my words! The day will show their truth!

“You are drunk, but not with wine; you reel, but not with strong drink. Jehovah has poured on you the spirit of deep sleep; your eyes—the prophets—are fast shut in slumber; your heads—the seers—has Jehovah covered with the mantle of sleep.¹ Hence, the Vision of His Will, made known by me, His servant, has become to you like the words of a sealed roll, respecting which, if it be given to one who knows letters, with the request to read it, he says, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’ It is shut up to you as much as a roll delivered to one who cannot read, who has to say that he is unlettered.

“Therefore the Lord has said, Since this people draw near to Me with their mouth only, and honour Me only with their lips, while their heart is far from Me, and their worship of Me is but outward, according to the commandments of men;² therefore, behold, I will still further deal wonderfully with them, wonderfully beyond thought; so that the wisdom of their wise men shall be proved folly, and the understanding of their knowing ones shall hide itself, ashamed!

“Woe to those who try hard to shroud their plans from Jehovah; who seek to work them out in secret,³ and say, ‘who sees or knows us?’ Out on your perverseness! Is the clay to be as highly thought of as the potter who works it, that his handiwork shall say to its maker, ‘He did not make me,’ or the thing formed say of him that formed it, ‘He has no understanding’? Judah is the clay, Jehovah is the potter; are you wiser or abler than He, to do what is best for the land, that you take the work into your own hands, out of His, by your plotting?

¹ Orientals cover their heads in sleeping. Niebuhr, *Arab.*, p. 10. Sonnini's *Egypt*, vol. ii. p. 334.

² Ritual prescriptions, which were already carefully laid down. Hos. viii. 12. Jer. viii. 8.

³ Referring to the secret schemes for a treaty with Egypt.

"Ye little know what is before you! In a very short time, to the eye of faith, it will be, as the proverb says, that 'Lebanon shall be turned into fruitful gardens,' and what are now 'fruitful gardens will be counted a forest.' A great spiritual change will take place. In that day those who are now deaf to my words shall hear what is written, and the eyes of those who are now blind to the truth will see, amidst the gloom and darkness of their visitation. And the humble shall increase their joy in Jehovah; the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the tyrannical great man shall then have come to nought, and the scoffers of to-day shall have ceased, and those that now watch to do iniquity shall be rooted out,—those who condemn men for word, and lay snares for those who complain before the judges at the city gate,¹ and drive away the upright from the judgment seat through the lies of false witnesses.²

"Therefore, thus saith Jehovah to the House of Jacob—He that redeemed Abraham from all dangers—Jacob shall no longer, when that time comes, be ashamed; neither shall his face any longer grow pale. For when he, or rather his sons,³ sees the work of My hands in their midst, they shall hallow My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel. And even those who were of a perverse spirit shall come to understanding, and the murmurers accept instruction."

This oration, as we may call it, was followed by others, in a similar spirit. After a time the Egyptian party succeeded in getting an embassy actually sent off to the Nile, but Isaiah continued his fearless denunciations and warnings; mingled, indeed, as was natural to his patriotic heart, with glorious pictures of the Messianic future.

"Woe to the rebellious children,⁴ saith Jehovah," he bursts out, "who form schemes which are not from Me, and an alliance⁵ contrary to My mind—to heap sin on sin. Who set out

¹ Hosea iv. 1.

² Lit., "a mere nothing." I have followed Delitzsch.

³ By some, the words "his sons" is thought to be a gloss.

⁴ Isaiah xxx.

⁵ *Delitzsch.*

to go down to Egypt without having asked at My mouth if they should do so; to flee to the protection of the Pharaoh, and seek shelter under the shadow of Egypt! Pharaoh's protection shall be your dishonour; the hoped for shelter under the shadow of Egypt your disgrace. For the princes of Judah have appeared at Zoan; her ambassadors have arrived at Hanes.¹ But all Judah shall be ashamed of a people who cannot profit them,² who are neither a help nor of use, but bring shame and disgrace.

"Yet in spite of this My people carry their riches on the shoulders of asses' colts, their treasures on the humps of camels—the gifts by which they hope to secure an alliance—into a land of trouble and distress, from out of whose deserts come the lioness and lion, the viper and flying serpent³—to a people who cannot profit them.⁴ For the promise of Egyptian help is vain and worthless; therefore, I call Egypt 'the Braggart that talks but sits still.'⁵

"Now go, write it on a tablet before them, and inscribe it in a roll, for a witness hereafter, for ever! For Judah is a rebellious people, children false to God their Father, children that will not listen to the teaching of Jehovah. Who say to the seers, 'Ye shall tell us no visions such as you have told us, only of coming evil,' and to the prophets, 'Ye shall not tell us the naked truth: speak pleasant things to us, prophecy good fortune and prosperity

¹ Heracleopolis Magna, the seat, like Tanis, of a local dynasty.

² Sargon says, "The people and their evil chiefs, to fight against me, unto Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, a monarch who could not save them, their presents carried, and besought his alliance." Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, p. 130.

³ Dr. Tristram fancies the name, "fiery flying serpent," is a poetical expression for the swiftly darting and springing serpents of the desert. *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 278.

⁴ The words, "The burden of the beasts of the South," seem an interpolation. *Ewald. Diestel. Knobel*. Eichhorn translates them, however, "A burden upon beasts making for the south." Delitzsch makes them, "An oracle on the hippopotami of the south."

⁵ Rahab is a Hebrew or Hebraized name for Egypt, meaning "boaster," "braggart." They promise but "sit still," that is, do nothing.

to us, instead of Assyrian oppression.¹ Leave your old ways, turn from your old course, and henceforth let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.'²

"Therefore, thus says the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word of Mine, spoken by My prophets,³ and trust in oppression⁴ and crooked ways, and stay yourselves on them—this sin will be to you like a rent in a high wall, which thus threatens to come down, and bulges out to its fall; the crash will come suddenly, in a moment, and shiver it as one shivers a clay pitcher, breaking it small, so that, in its wreck, there will not be left a sherd large enough to lift fire from the hearth, or water out of the cistern.⁵

"For thus has the Lord, even Jehovah, said, the Holy One of Israel, 'By returning to Me and resting on Me you shall be saved; in keeping quiet and in confidence on Me shall be your strength.' But you would not do this, and have said, 'No; we will fly to the battle on eager war horses, got from Egypt.'

¹ Lit. "prophecy falsehood."

² Or, "take out of our sight, the Holy One of Israel."

³ To trust in God, as able to uphold them without help from Egypt.

⁴ By the heavy burdens which a rebellion against Assyria would impose.

⁵ This is an allusion to the custom of breaking worthless pottery into very small fragments, or even to powder, to make "homrah," which, when mixed with lime, forms the cement used universally in Palestine, and the East at large, for coating the sides and bottoms of cisterns, reservoirs, aqueducts and the like, and making them thoroughly watertight. Men may still be seen every autumn, outside Jerusalem, sitting on the ground crushing a heap of large fragments of pottery into "homrah," which they sell as a regular article of trade. They make it by pushing back and forward over the mass in front of them, a heavy rounded stone, choosing a rocky place on which to lay their heaps for the process. When the whole is thoroughly broken, it is fit for sale—a coarse kind of homrah consisting of pieces about a quarter of an inch square; the finer kind being similar fragments ground to powder. In this state it is used to make the roofs and walls of houses watertight. See *Neil*, pp. 112-128.

Therefore, ye will indeed flee, but it will be before the foe! Ye have said, 'We will ride swift horses.' Yes! you will indeed ride off the field on them, chased by swift pursuers. A thousand of you shall flee at the war-cry¹ of one of the enemy; at the war-cry of five your whole army shall flee, till ye be scattered like the solitary flag-pole² on the top of a mountain, or a lonely banner³ on a hill."

But the prophet cannot continue this strain of threatening. His heart yearns over his nation, who are still the people of God, and he proceeds to temper his sternness by gracious promises.

"But when it has come to this, Jehovah will have pity on you. He will long till He can be gracious to you, and will rise from His throne⁴ to have mercy on you. For Jehovah is a God of righteousness: happy are all they that hope patiently for Him!"

Judah cannot be suffered to perish before its enemies. Moreover, it will turn from its sins, under the pressure of its troubles, and then shall come the glorious days of the Messiah!

"Thou people dwelling in Zion and Jerusalem—Ye shall weep no more as ye did, when the foe came up against you! Jehovah will assuredly be gracious to you when you cry to Him for help; as soon as He hears He will answer you! Even when you are most pressed in the siege He will give you bread, though in short measure, and water, though little, and your teachers, the prophets, will not need to hide themselves any longer from the hatred of the great, but your eyes shall look on them. And as

¹ *Eichhorn. Knobel. Diestel.*

² Translated "mast" in Isa. xxxiii. 23. Ezek. xxvii. 5.

³ Translated "pole," Num. xxi. 8, 9. Elsewhere, "ensign" or "banner." Flags were raised on hills to give warning of an invasion or as a rallying point for fugitives. Isa. v. 26; xi. 12; xviii. 3; lxii. 10. Jer. iv. 6, 21. Ps. lx. 4. Delitzsch renders "beacon" by "pine-tree."

⁴ *Diestel.*

often as you stray either to the right hand or the left, your ears shall hear words behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' And you will strip off, as no longer holy, the silver overlaid on some of your graven images, and the coating of gold on others; you shall cast away the images themselves¹ as you do what is loathsome; you will say to them, 'Out, from this.'

"Then will God give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and rich and nourishing bread from the increase of your fields. Your cattle, in that day, will feed in wide pastures. And the oxen and young asses that till the ground will eat mixed provender,² seasoned with salt, winnowed with the shovel and the basket.³ And on all the lofty mountains, and on every high hill shall be running streams and flowing waters—in the day of the great slaughter of the foes of Jehovah, whether the Assyrian or the scornful in Jerusalem,—and the towers in which they trusted fall. And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold—as the light of seven days⁴—in the day when Jehovah binds up the wounds of His people, and heals the bruises of His stroke.

But now, once again, the prophet sees before him the judgments impending on Assyria, which are contrasted with the joy of Israel, redeemed by Jehovah from its hand.

"Behold, the Name of Jehovah comes from afar. His anger burns; His approach is terrible;⁵ His lips full of indignation;

¹ The images were of wood, overlaid with silver or gold.

² A mixture of barley or oats with vetches and beans, all sown and reaped together. Pliny, *H. N.*, xviii. 15, 41.

³ Cleaned after threshing, by being thrown up against the wind from a shovel or a basket. The straw broken small by the feet of the oxen in threshing, as already noticed, is the usual food of cattle in Palestine; but clean grain will be given them in these happy times. See pp. 361, 372.

⁴ Even nature shall be glorified in the triumph of the Messianic times. See Rom. viii. 19 ff.

⁵ Delitzsch and Cheyne translate this, "in thick uplifting of smoke." Diestel and Ewald are in effect as in the text. The image is that of a storm coming along the heavens from afar

His tongue like devouring fire; His breath as an overflowing flood, reaching even to the neck; to winnow the nations with the sieve of destruction and to put a bridle, turning them astray, in the jaws of the nations!

"But ye shall sing, then, as in the eve of the Passover feast,¹ and ye shall have gladness of heart as when one travels on to the sound of flutes, going up to the mount of Jehovah, the Rock of Israel!²

"Jehovah will make the majesty of His voice³ to be heard; the thunder shall be as it were His cry of war, when He comes on against the foe: He will show the lighting down of His arm, to destroy him in the fury of His indignation, amidst the bursting of storm clouds and a tempest of rain and hail.⁴ For at the thunder of Jehovah shall Asshur tremble, when he is struck down by the rod of the Almighty. And at every blow of the avenging rod, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, will Judah sound aloud its timbrels and harps; its deliverance drawing nigh. With stroke on stroke of His swinging mace will Jehovah fight against the enemy. Already is a Tophet prepared; for the burning of the corpse⁵ of the Assyrian king is it made ready. Jehovah has made the pile high and broad; fire and wood are in abundance; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it.

¹ *Gesenius*. Songs of praise and thanks were sung then, followed by the Great Hallel—Psalms cxiii.—cxviii.

² Ps. cxxii. 1-4.

³ "The voice of God" is the thunder. Ps. xxix.

⁴ A prediction suitable to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, though the agency is here described in the grand imagery of poetry.

⁵ Among the Hebrews only the bodies of criminals were burned. Lev. xx. 14; xxi. 9. Jos. vii. 25. *Winer*, art. *Begraben*. A place in the valley of Hinnom, on the south side of Jerusalem, where human beings were burned in the Canaanitish period, and where in the days of Ahaz and at other times they burned children to Moloch, was called Tophet—a place to be spat upon, or abhorred. The bodies of many Assyrian dignitaries were probably burnt by the Jews after Sennacherib's flight. Jer. vii. 31; xix. 13. 2 Kings xxiii. 10. 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.

But the Egyptian faction were too strong and determined to be easily turned aside. Isaiah, therefore, returned to the attack on them, again and again.

“Woe,”¹ says he, in another oration, delivered doubtless to excited throngs, and perhaps before the leaders of the faction themselves—“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and put their trust in the horses of Pharaoh, and their confidence in his chariots, because they are many, and in his horsemen, because they are valiant,² but never look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek after Jehovah!

“Yet He also is Wise—wiser than they—and will bring evil to pass, instead of good—evil which their wisdom cannot avert,—and will not take back His words, once spoken, He will arise against the party of the wicked—the great men of Jerusalem who oppose His prophets—and against their Egyptian allies who help them to do evil.

“Nor can they resist Him! For the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit. Therefore when Jehovah stretches out His hand in wrath, the helper will stumble, and he that is helped will fall; they will perish together.”

Jehovah will put the Assyrian to flight without the help of Egypt, and will Himself protect Jerusalem.

“For thus has Jehovah spoken to me. As when the lion and the young lion growl over their prey, he who calls out a crowd of shepherds against them is not afraid of their cries or dismayed by their roaring,—so Jehovah of Hosts will descend, to fight for Mount Zion and her hill. As birds hovering over their nests protect their young, so will Jehovah defend Jerusalem. He will hover over it and protect it; He will pass over it³ and deliver it.

“Turn ye then, O children of Israel, to Him from whom ye have so foully revolted! For in that day, the day of your sore need,

¹ Isaiah xxxi.

² The mountainous Judah had few horses or chariots; the level Egypt had many.

³ Like the angel on the night of the passover.

ye shall find that your idols cannot protect you, and every man will cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, the sinful things which your own hands have made. And Asshur shall fall by the sword, not of man, but of God; the sword not of a mortal, but of the Eternal, shall devour him. He shall flee before the sword and his young men shall be made slaves.¹ And the fugitive Assyrian leader shall pass by his strongholds, for fear, not seeking a refuge in them in his flight, for he shall be afraid of the Jewish ensign floating from them, saith Jehovah, whose home-fire is in Zion and His hearth in Jerusalem."

Such thoughts naturally raised in the mind of the prophet the thought of the happy times of the Messiah, so dear to his heart. He therefore continues:—

"Behold, the King shall reign in righteousness,² and the princes rule justly,³ in those days, when the idols shall be cast away and the tyranny of the Assyrian destroyed. And A Man⁴ shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as streams of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great cliff in a sun-scorched land!⁵ And the eyes of those who see will no longer be dim, as now, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken attentively. And the heart of the thoughtless will have wise understanding, and the stammering tongue will be

¹ Prisoners of war were thus treated in antiquity. They were set to "task service" in the field, in herding cattle, in building, and otherwise. Josh. ix. 21. 1 Kings ix. 21. Deut. xx. 11.

² Isaiah xxxii.

³ Cheyne thinks that the prophet may have had the hope that Hezekiah would distinguish himself thus, and that it is probable there was a great religious revival after the deliverance. But in its full sense the prophecy can only be understood of the Divine Messiah.

⁴ *Sept.* "The Man." Kay renders it "a man"; others "every man," that is, all the rulers, and the king himself. It will be true, indeed, of all, in the Messianic reign, that they will help and protect each other, but the Messiah, Himself, will be the strength and glory of all.

⁵ Virgil, *Georg.*, iii. 145.

clear and flowing.¹ The ungodly man shall no more be called honourable, nor the knave be greeted as worthy. For the ungodly man speaks ungodliness; his heart works iniquity, to practise evil and utter error concerning Jehovah, and thus leaves the hungry soul empty, and takes away the drink of the thirsty. As to the knave, the means he uses, and the plans he designs are evil. He devises wicked schemes to destroy the poor with lying words, even when he speaks that which is true. But the noble soul deviseth noble things and stands fast to them."

Turning now to the women assembled, we may suppose, in the background, or at the side of the audience, the prophet addresses them separately:—

"Arise, ye women that sit, unconcerned, at your ease; hear my voice, ye daughters so carelessly confident; give ear to my speech! One year more,² and ye shall tremble, ye who think yourselves so secure! For the vintage shall be consumed, the fruit harvest will not be yours. The enemy shall have both. Tremble ye women that are at ease; be in dismay ye confident ones. Strip off your fine array; make you bare; and gird sackcloth, for lamentation, on your loins. Beat on your bosoms, in sorrow, for your pleasant fields, for your fruitful vineyards. On the land of My people shall come up thorns and briers; yea on all the happy homes of this joyous city. For the fine mansions round it will be forsaken; the hum of the city be silent;³ Hill and Watch Tower,⁴ where your gardens and mansions lie; will be for hiding places of foxes, and the like, for ever; a joy of wild asses; a pasture for flocks, until the Spirit be poured out on us from on high. Then shall the pasture-wastes become a fruit-covered land, and the fruit-covered land will be no more esteemed in that glorious time than a mere forest is now. Justice will then reign in the pasture-wastes, and righteousness dwell in the fruit-covered

¹ The mocker will speak seriously.

² "A year, to the day, from this." *Ewald*. So, virtually, *Delitzsch*, *Diestel*, and others.

³ Lit. "lonely," "desolate."

⁴ Ophel, on the south of the city, and apparently the tower on the east of Zion. *Diestel*.

land. And the effect of that righteousness shall be peace, and its fruit quiet and security for ever. My people shall dwell in peaceful houses, and quiet resting places.

"When the hail of Jehovah's wrath¹ shall smite down the forest-like army of the foe; when Jerusalem shall have been brought to direst extremity, and shall have turned to its God, shall all this happen. In those blissful days, happy will ye be who sow beside the countless waters that will then irrigate the land, and who turn out the ox and the ass to graze on the quiet pastures!"

The rebellion of Ashdod and the revolt of most of the nations of Palestine in B.C. 712-711, brought the Assyrians to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, to fulfil, unconsciously, the prophecies so lately uttered respecting them. Sargon, himself, being too busy in the east to come in person, an army under a Tartan or general commanding-in-chief, was sent, to suppress the symptoms of revolt and of confederacy with Egypt. Ashdod, "the Strong," was the centre of the movement, and the first attack was, therefore, against it. "Azuri, king of Ashdod," says Sargon, in his annals;² "made up his mind not to be obedient to (the god) Asshur, and not to pay his tribute any longer. He sent to the kings, his neighbours,³ messengers hostile to Assyria. Then I meditated vengeance and replaced him by another in the rule of his lands. I elevated his brother Akhimit to the royalty in his stead. But the people of Syria inclined to revolt, and were tired of the government of Akhimit, and raised Yaman to the throne, though, like his predecessor, not its legitimate master. In the fury of my heart I did not divide my army, and I did not diminish the ranks, but I marched against Ashdod with my

¹ Isaiah xxix. 6; xxx. 27, 30.

² *Records of the Past*, vol. vii. pp. 26, 40. Menant, *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 169.

³ Hezekiah, doubtless, among others.

chariots and horsemen, my warriors and my baggage, and the united host followed steadily in the footmarks of my sandals. I besieged and took Ashdod and Girut Ashdodim. I took the gods who inhabited these towns, with the gold, the silver, and the whole contents of Yaman's palace. I then rebuilt these towns (which had been burnt down) and settled in them people whom my arm had conquered; (bringing them from other parts, to take the place of the inhabitants who had been carried off). I put over them my lieutenant as governor. I treated them as Assyrians, and they have since obeyed me." In another place he adds that "Yaman left his wife, his sons, his daughters, and fled through the lands of the midday sun, to Libya.¹ . . . Then the king of Libya was overwhelmed by the immense fear of Asshur, my lord, and bound Yaman's hands and feet with iron chains and sent (him), by envoys, to my presence in Assyria."

No help had come from Egypt, the selfish fomentor of the rebellion, and the resistance to Assyria at once collapsed. Sargon appears to have marched from Philistia into Judah to crush any plot of the Egyptian faction in Jerusalem, and thus came in contact with Hezekiah. It must have been at this time that he "subdued the remote land of Judah," as he boasts, in one of his inscriptions, though unfortunately no details are given. But the march of Assyrian armies were always marked by the same horrors, and in this case must have fulfilled

¹ This is Oppert's translation. Lenormant says that the part indicated was a petty kingdom of the Egyptian Delta. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 356. Schabaka, or So, who had deceived Hosea of Samaria, and fought with Assyria at Raphia, died in 706, a year before Sargon. *Lenormant*, vol. ii. p. 356. Tirhakah succeeded him.

Isaiah's prediction only too literally. Like his predecessors, Sargon boasts of his cruelty in his campaigns. He tells us that he "treated Hanun, king of Gaza, like a slave," carried off whole populations, burnt cities with fire after sacking them, flayed men alive, killed multitudes beyond number of all classes, and swept like a desolating storm over any country he invaded. The sufferings of Judah must have been indescribable.

The terror of Sargon's victories at Ashdod and elsewhere was extreme, even in the farthest south. The king of Meroë,¹ he tells us, "had never sent ambassadors to the kings my ancestors, to demand peace and friendship and acknowledge the power of the god Merodach. But the huge fear of my majesty touched him; He recognized the greatness of the god Adar, and turned his steps towards Assyria and prostrated himself before me."²

The world was kept in these years in constant excitement by Sargon's military enterprises. Scarcely had Palestine been quieted before a new campaign on the Lower Euphrates filled all mouths with fresh wonders. Merodach Baladan had now reigned at Babylon for twelve years,³ and had fortified it strongly. He had, moreover, constantly sent ambassadors to other countries to form leagues of mutual defence against the Great King. His capital had repeatedly been taken by the Assyrians, and this revival of its power was intolerable to Sargon. Pretences for an invasion were easily made. Its king had "not fulfilled the commands of the great gods and had neglected their worship." He had, more-

¹ So the word is translated by Oppert and Menant.

² *Menant*, p. 186.

³ *Inscriptions des Sargonides*, pp. 26, 27. *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 187.

over, "leagued himself with the king of Elam, on the east side of the mouths of the Tigris ; had stirred up the wandering Arabs against Assyria, and prepared for war." But at Sargon's approach Merodach Baladan strengthened his fortresses, and withdrew to the marshy districts near the mouth of the Euphrates, where defence was easiest. He had left the inland towns to the care of his generals, choosing the city of Dur-Alkhar as the spot at which to make a stand. Strengthening it by broad ditches filled from the river, he, here, awaited the enemy. But Sargon once more triumphed, scattering the forces drawn up to oppose him, and making more than 18,000 men prisoners, besides taking all the beasts of burden in the camp. Fleeing still farther south, the remnant of the patriot army took refuge in the inaccessible marshes and reed beds of Uknî. Thither Sargon followed them, as far as possible, hewing down the palm-trees, destroying the gardens, burning every house or mansion, and reducing the whole region to the greatest misery.

Merodach Baladan, however, escaped to the mountains of Elam, beyond the Tigris, to await better times, leaving Babylon to fall into the hands of the enemy, against whom he was powerless. Passing the interval till the next fighting season, in its palaces, Sargon then found himself once more confronted by his fearless opponent, who, this time, had made the city of Dur-Yakin, in the marshy south, his central stronghold. But fortune still went against the hero. He had surrounded the town with a huge moat into which he turned a stream from the river. The whole surface of the ground, moreover, was broken up by a net-work of canals, to impede the movements of the invaders. "His banners," says Sargon, "floated like birds along the banks of these streams." He could not, however, stand against the Assyrian attack. "The

waters of the canals bore away in their course the bodies of the rebels, thick as the leaves of trees." The Arab tribes in Merodach Baladan's army fled, and he himself retired into the city, leaving behind, in the camp, his golden throne, his royal umbrella, his golden sceptre, his silver chariot, and the splendid furniture of his tent. But the town itself presently fell; its ramparts were destroyed; its houses burned and left a heap of ruins. The queen, and the royal family, were taken "as slaves," with all they possessed, and the palace sacked. But the life of the king was spared, and his wife and family, as we may suppose, restored to him, though he was not allowed to retain his kingdom; an Assyrian viceroy being installed in his place. Thus passed the spring and summer of the year 709, closing by Sargon's re-entering Babylon in triumph. "There," says he, "I betook myself to the temples of Bel, the judge of the gods. With exulting heart and joyful countenance I grasped the hands of the great lord, Merodach, the august god."¹ Sargon was now, finally, king of Babylon as well as of Assyria.

¹ *Annales des rois d'Assyrie*, p 189. Lenormant has a striking essay on Merodach Baladan in his *Premières Civilizations*, vol. ii. p. 202 ff., under the title of *Un Patriote Babylonien du VIII^e Siècle avant notre ère*.





CHAPTER XV.

THE LATER YEARS OF SARGON.

THE departure of the Assyrian army from before Jerusalem had vindicated to the letter the promises of Isaiah, given in the name of God, that the Holy City, though invested by the foe, would be delivered from his hand. But the condition of the country after the invasion was sad in the extreme, and, still worse, the moral state of the people proved to have been little benefited by the discipline through which it had passed. It is at this time that we catch the only glimpse of Isaiah's personal environments. "In the year when the Tartan came to Ashdod,"¹ he tells us : "When Sargon,² the king

¹ Isaiah xx. 1 ff.

² It has already been noticed (see note to p. 373) how striking and even startling it is to meet the name of Sargon here. It occurs, as has been said, nowhere else in the Scriptures, and all knowledge of the great king who bore it had so entirely died away, that even so late as 1872 we find Knobel and Diestel entirely ignorant of his existence (*Isaiah*, p. 169). Yet his huge palace at Khorsabad, near Nineveh, with the town surrounding it, retained his name in the East, till after the Arab conquest. An old Arab geographer speaks of Khorsabad as *adjoining the ancient ruined city of Sargon*. *Asiat. Soc. Journ.*, vol. xii. p. 419, n. 2. But beyond this long forgotten allusion, discovered by chance in our own day, there was no record of Sargon having ever lived, except in this verse of Isaiah, till the ruins of Nineveh

of Assyria sent him—and he fought against Ashdod and took it, the Lord spake by Isaiah.” He was commanded to perform a symbolical act, the only one recorded of him. The characteristics of the older prophets had in this respect ceased, and all-powerful words had taken the place of emblematic action. But Isaiah was for once directed to take off the black outer sackcloth mantle of coarse linen, or hair, the robe of mourning, which it seems—like other prophets¹—he habitually wore, and to remove the sandals from his feet, and go about Jerusalem thus “naked” and barefooted, for three years, as a sign that Egypt and Ethiopia should be utterly humbled within that time. Egyptians and Ethiopians, young men and old, sent to aid the rebellion of the Palestine nations, were to be led off captive by the Great King, similarly stripped and humbled. Nothing less than such a lengthened enforcement of the great lesson of the worthlessness of an Egyptian alliance would impress it on the populations of Judah and Canaan at large. The overthrow of Ashdod and the other revolted provinces must, however, have convinced multitudes that Jehovah, speaking by the prophet, had counselled them with the truest wisdom. “The people of Palestine, Judah, Edom, and Moab, dwelling beside the sea,” who “brought tribute and presents to Asshur my lord,” says Sargon in one place, “were speaking treason”²—but within the time named by Isaiah, their hopes, as we have seen, were crushed, in spite of any trifling help sent from Egypt.

It is to this period, apparently, that the chapter which

disclosed the annals in which the long and magnificent story of his reign is told.

¹ Zech. xiii. 4. John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 4. Sheepskins or goatskin coats were worn in some cases. 2 Kings i. 8; Heb. xi. 37

² Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, p. 130.

now opens the prophecies of Isaiah, must be referred. Patriot as well as seer, he grieves over the desolation of his country by the invaders who had lately swept through it; pleads with his people against the depravity of the times, and strives to rouse them to reformation, by a touching presentation of Jehovah's tenderness, and longing to forgive them and restore them to His favour.

"Hear, O ye heavens," says he,¹ "and give ear, O earth, for Jehovah speaks! 'I have nourished and brought up sons to manhood and greatness, but they have been untrue to me. The ox knows its owner; the ass its master's crib, but Israel has no knowledge; my people have no understanding.'

"Ah sinful race of guilt-laden men! a generation of evil doers! of unworthy sons! who have forsaken Jehovah, despised the Holy One of Israel, and broken loose from Him!

"Why² should ye be stricken any more through continuing your revolt against God? The whole³ head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no part sound. The body is all wounds and wales and festering sores, that have not been pressed out and cleansed, nor bound up nor softened with oil.

"Your land is a desolation; your cities are burned with fire; the foreign soldiery devour the fruits of your soil before your eyes; it is a waste such as only barbarians leave. And Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, though saved from the foe, is left like a poor shed⁴ in a vineyard; like a frail hut in a garden of cucumbers; like a lone watch tower!⁵

¹ Isaiah i.

² *Knobel, Diestel, Ewald*, and the *Vulgate* have: "On what part."

³ *Delitzsch, Naegelsbach, Cheyne*, have: "every."

⁴ In which the watchman sat while his crop was ripening, to protect it from birds, etc. Its loose boards and branches would speedily be the very image of ruin, when he had left it, after the vintage was gathered. The hut in the garden is a similar figure.

⁵ *Ges., Thes. Hitzig. Knobel. Diestel.*

"Had not Jehovah of Hosts spared a small remnant of us, we should have been swept away as utterly as Sodom; we should have perished from the earth like Gomorrah!

"Hear the word of Jehovah, ye Princes of Sodom;¹ give ear to the lesson of our God, ye people of Gomorrah!¹

"What is the multitude of your sacrifices worth to Me?" says Jehovah. "I am satiated with the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. I have no pleasure in the blood of bullocks, or lambs, or he goats. When ye appear before me in the forecourts of the temple, who desires these sacrifices of beasts at your hands, ye who bring them as offerings?"

"Bring no more worthless meat offerings; their smoke is an abominable incense to me. As to your new moon services, and your sabbaths, and celebration of festivals,—iniquity and solemn assemblies in one,—I cannot endure them. My soul hates your new moons and feasts, they are a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread forth your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; pray ever so much, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood!

"Wash you, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your deeds from before My eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek what is right. Restrain the oppressor. Do justice to the orphan. Plead the cause of the widow.

"Come, now, and let us settle our dispute together," says Jehovah. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson they shall be like wool.

"If ye willingly obey Me, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye resist and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword." Thus has the mouth of Jehovah spoken.

"How has the once faithful city become a harlot; she that was full of justice; in whom righteousness was counted to have its dwelling, but now murderers! Your silver has turned to dross! your wine is thinned with water. Your law-makers are law-breakers, and comrades of thieves; every one of them loves a bribe, and hunts after gifts. They keep back justice from the orphan, and the cause of the widow does not come before them!

"Therefore, says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, the Mighty One

¹ Jerusalem.

of Israel : ' Ha ! I will wreak My desire on My adversaries, and avenge Myself on My enemies, and turn My hand against you, smelting out your dross as with lye,¹ and I will take away all the alloy from the silver. Then I will make your judges as they were of old, and your counsellors as in early times, and, after I have done so, men will call you the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.'

"Zion shall be saved through justice, and her reformed sons through righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall all be destroyed, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed ! For ye ungodly will be ashamed of the terebinth groves where ye worshipped idols. Ye shall blush for the shady gardens you loved, where you committed sin. And on the day of God's judgments ye shall be like terebinths with blasted leaves, and as a waterless garden. The rich man shall be as tow, and his idol as a spark. They will both burn together and no one will quench them !

Whether the grand orations, of which this is one, were delivered, like our sermons, at stated times—perhaps the Sabbaths or feast days—or as occasion rose, cannot be known. But the lofty enthusiasm they reveal could hardly have been restricted to periodical outbursts. In his long coarse black mantle of sackcloth, with his feet bare, he must have been a familiar figure to every one in the narrow streets of the little mountain city which was the centre of his activity. It may have been in these days of sadness, when Sargon's campaigns were spreading desolation far and near, that some utterances preserved to us respecting Edom were uttered.

One striking fragment is ominously prefaced by the words : The burden of the land devoted to silent desolation.² It begins abruptly, as follows :

¹ Ar. alkaline flux to make the metal melt sooner. Winer, art. *Langensalz*. Borax is the flux commonly used in England.

² This is the meaning given in *Richm* to "Dumah." Isa. xxi. 11, 12. The Assyrian name for Edom is Udumu.

"A voice," continues the prophet, "calls to me out of Seir—Watchman, what watch of the night is it? and, in its eager anxiety, repeats the cry, Watchman, what watch of the night is it? Is darkness soon to pass and joy return?"

But the watchman prophet replies:—

"The morning indeed comes, but so, alas! does the night; light and darkness are both in store for you. If you wish to inquire further from me, do so hereafter; come back to me when you desire."

Perhaps the exact future of Edom had not as yet been revealed to the seer.

At a later time he could speak more fully, and did so; treating Edom as the representative of the collective enemies of the kingdom of God, and prefacing its doom by a picture of the wrath of the Almighty on the world at large, at the end of all things, when the sins of the race shall have filled their measure.¹

"Draw near," said he,² "ye nations, to listen, and ye peoples, hearken! Let the whole earth give ear, and all that it contains—the world and all its populations."³

"For the indignation of Jehovah is kindled against all the heathen nations; His wrath against all their armies. He has laid them under His ban; He has devoted them to slaughter! Their slain shall be cast out, unburied; the stench of their corpses will fill the air,⁴ and the mountains will flow down⁵ with their blood. And all the army of heaven—the stars—shall also die and rot away, and the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll;⁶ their whole hosts of stars shall fall down from them, as a

¹ Matt. xxiv. 29. Isa. lxxv. 17; lxxvi. 22. ² Isa. xxxiv. 1–17.

³ Lit. "that springs from it."

⁴ Lit. "go up."

⁵ Lit. "be melted," as if washed away.

⁶ A scroll—the written book of antiquity, which was fixed at each end to a round piece of wood, etc., and closed by rolling these together, towards the centre.

withered leaf falls from the vine, or the autumn leaves from the fig-tree!"

The awful prophetic vision of the final judgment of God on his enemies, now singles out the doom of Edom—the type of inveterate hostility to His kingdom.

"For my sword, borne back with Me to heaven, has already been bathed in the blood of My enemies here on earth; behold, it shall now light in judgment on Idumea, the people I have doomed! The sword of Jehovah drips¹ with blood; it is heavy with fat—with the blood of lambs and he-goats,² with the fat of the kidneys of rams;³ for Jehovah has a sacrifice in Bozrah;³ a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. The huge wild bulls,⁴ shall be struck down along with the lambs and goats—the bullocks with the steers.⁴ Their land will be soaked with their blood, and its dust manured with their fat.

"For Jehovah will have a day of vengeance and a year of retribution for the wrongs⁵ of Zion. The mountain torrents of Edom shall be turned into pitch;⁶ its very dust into brimstone;

¹ Lit. "is full of." The arrows of God are said, Dent. xxxii. 42, to be "drunk with blood," and the sword to have a mouth. Gen. xxxiv. 26. Exod. xvii. 13, 26. Jer. xxi. 7. So also Virg., *Æneid.*, xi. 804.

² The people at large.

³ The present El Buseirah, containing about fifty huts or tents of Arabs, pitched amidst the ruins of a very large ancient town. It lies about twenty miles south-east of the foot of the Dead Sea, among the mountains of Edom, and was once the capital of the country. Amos i. 12. Isa. lxiii. 1. Jer. xlix. 13, 22. Bozrah means "The strong place." See art. by Prof. Mühlau, in *Riehm.*

⁴ The great men of the land. The "wild bull" is lit. the rimu or aurochs of the Assyrian inscriptions. The Heb. word is rem, plur. remim. Houghton, in *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. v. p. 368,

⁵ Lit. "quarrel," = cause."

⁶ Volcanic agencies are implied by such a figure. Sodom and Gomorrah lie near, and extinct craters with streams of ancient lava are close by. Ritter, vol. xiv. p. 1045; vol. xv. p. 769. Sulphur springs are also met with. The mountains of Edom are

its soil to burning pitch. It shall not be quenched day nor night; its smoke shall ascend for ever. It shall be waste from generation to generation. None shall pass through it for ever and ever.¹ But the pelican and the bittern² shall take possession of it; the eagle-owl³ and the raven will dwell in it, and God shall stretch out over it the measuring line of confusion, and the plummet⁴ of desolation.⁵ No nobles will be there who may claim the kingdom; all her princes shall be no more. And thorns shall spring up in its palaces; nettles and thistles in its castles; it shall be a habitation of jackals; a pasture for ostriches. And the howling wild creatures of the wastes shall meet the howling wolf, and the wood-spirit shall call to his fellow, and the night-spirit⁶ have her resting place there. The arrow-snake shall make its nest there, and lay her eggs, and hatch them, and gather her young under her shadow; there, also, shall the vultures assemble, one to another.

“Seek ye out from the Book of Jehovah, and read. Not one of these creatures shall be wanting; none of them shall lack its fellow. For the mouth of Jehovah has commanded; His Spirit has gathered them. He has thrown the lot for them, which part

vast masses of lava, with layers of sandstone which extend at their base.

¹ This passage must be taken as a highly wrought expression of utter desolation and solitude. There are not any active volcanoes in Edom, and even in Bozrah, as we have seen in Note 3, p. 406, there is still a village of Arabs.

² The *Sept.*, and, after it, most translators, render this “hedgehog;” but this creature never frequents marshy places such as the pelican chooses, while the bittern does. In *Riehm* it is supposed that the “springing snake,” which leaps from trees, is intended. It is a small reptile, perhaps the one meant by flying serpent. Tristram is in favour of “bittern.”

³ *Tristram*, p. 192. ⁴ *Diestel*, lit. “stones” used as plummetts.

⁵ The two words are the same as in Gen. i. 2, Tohu and Bohu.

⁶ The word is “lilith.” It corresponds to the Assyrian “lilit,” the name of female demons who were fancied to kill children and even adults. The “satyrs” may be the “lil”—the male of these of imaginary beings. Lenormant, *La Magie*, pp. 30–36. (See p. 276.)

each shall inhabit, and His hand has divided it to them with the measuring line. They shall possess it for ever; they shall dwell in it from generation to generation!"¹

¹ The utter desolation of Edom in contrast to its ancient glory and wide population has excited the wonder of all travellers. Dean Stanley speaks of these as hard to realize from the present aspect of the country.* The ruined cities of Edom, says he, on the mountains east of the Arabah, and the remains and history of Edom itself, indicate a traffic and population which now seem to us almost inconceivable? "Edom, once given to Esau," says Stephens,† "as being of the fatness of the earth, but now a barren waste, a picture of death, an eternal monument of the wrath of God, and a fearful witness to the truth of the words spoken by His prophets, lay before me. The great caravan routes which ran through it in the days of David and Solomon and under the Roman empire are now completely broken up, and the great hadj routes to Mecca and Damascus lie along its borders, barely touching and not passing through it."‡ Petra was formerly the centre to which all the trade of Arabia converged, and Edom was wealthy by the profits thus realized, as well as by its sheep, etc, and the abundant fertility of its then well irrigated but now waterless soil. "Edom," says Burckhardt, "may with great propriety be called a stony desert, though susceptible of culture. In many places it is overgrown with wild herbs, but it must have been once thickly inhabited, for traces of many towns and villages are met with, . . . as well as many springs."§ "The country," says Dr. Olin, "is blighted with cheerless desolation and hopeless sterility. The hill sides and mountains, once covered with earth, and clothed with vineyards, are now bare rocks."|| Of the palaces of Petra, Lord Claud Hamilton writes: "The ground is strewn with portions of the roof, hewn stones, and portions of the cornice, amongst which numbers of *thistles*, *prickly plants*, and *nettles* grow. The common English blackthorn and bramble are very common in Petra, and a plant more prickly than either—the ordinary stinging nettle. The place, in fact, is full of brooms, thistles, nettles and thorns." "I was often reminded,"

* *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 28.

† *Incidents of Travel*, vol. ii. p. 34.

‡ *Stephens*, vol. ii. p. 35.

§ *Travels*, p. 436.

|| *Olin's Travels*, vol. ii. pp. 15, 55.

A year before Sargon's invasion of Arabia, Isaiah had startled the crowds of Jerusalem by predicting its occurrence and its result, and his prophetic words, then delivered, have happily been preserved.¹

Arab tribes of the south had frequently given trouble after the conquest of Samaria, invading its territory at their pleasure, and carrying off slaves and booty, to the terror, doubtless, of Judah; if indeed it, also, did not suffer. In the year 716, however, Sargon tells us, he sent an expedition into their distant retreats, and "subdued the uncultivated places of the remote Arabia, which had never before given tribute to Assyria," "bringing into subjection, among others, the Thamudites," still a well-known Arab tribe, which roamed anciently in the central districts of Arabia Petrea.² The fame of this striking campaign re-echoed in all lands and impelled distant princes to do homage to a monarch whose power

says Dr. Olin, "of the prediction of Isaiah, in the thirty-fourth chapter of his prophecies, by the multitude and noise of the wild fowls, each answering his mate." Scorpions abound, every stone seeming to hide them, and snakes are numerous. "The creeping things which are found in the ruins of Petra," says Dr. Wilson, "are so numerous, that the place like all others, I suppose, of a similar character in the country, may be characteristically spoken of as 'an habitation for dragons.'"* "Among the birds which we noticed," he continues "are the eagle, the kite, the hawk, the great owl, the small owl, the raven, etc."† "I observed also," he adds, "some white vultures, which were generally seen in pairs, soaring above the valley or perched on the rock." The wild goat and wild boar, the hedgehog and porcupine, the fox, wolf, jackal, hyæna, lynx, leopard, hare, etc., are more or less common in Edom. The word "satyr" may mean goat—and if so, herds of goats further illustrate the prophecy. They are often met. Thus wonderfully have Isaiah's predictions been verified.

¹ Isaiah xxi. 13-17.

² Ptol., *Geograph.*, vi. 7.

* *Lands of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 329

† *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 237.

was so far-reaching and resistless. To secure the friendship of the Great King,¹ tribute from the Pharaoh, from the king of the Sabæans in the south of Arabia, and from the "Queen of the Arabians," the locality of whose dominions is not accurately known, was sent humbly to Nineveh—that of the Arabs consisting of gold, spices,² horses, and camels. A number of Arab prisoners, also, were brought to the district of Samaria, forming thenceforward a permanent element in its population.³

The prediction opens abruptly, thus:—

"Ye shall seek shelter by night in the scraggy bush of the Arabian hills, not in the stations on the route, O ye caravans of Dedanites.⁴ Bring forth water to the thirsty fugitives, ye inhabitants of the land of Tema—dwelling between Palmyra and Petra—meet the escaped with the bread of welcome. For they have fled before the drawn sword, and the bent bow, and the fury of war! For thus hath Jehovah of Hosts said to me: In a year more, as the years of a hireling, all the glory of Kedar⁵ shall be gone, and the remnant of the mighty archers of the Kedarenes shall be small. Jehovah the God of Israel hath spoken it."

It must have been in these years also, apparently after Sargon had approached Jerusalem, and in the prophetic anticipation of future invasions, that the first great oracle directly launched against Assyria filled all minds with wondering interest.

"Woe to Assyria" cried Isaiah,⁶ speaking in high inspiration, as the mouthpiece of God,—“Assyria, the rod of My anger, he

¹ *Menant*, p. 182.

² Or, perfumes.

³ Neh. ii. 19; iv. 7. Edom and the other nations bordering on Palestine were crushed in the campaigns of 711–709, when compromised in the revolt of Ashdod.

⁴ Vol. i. p. 241, refers to another Dedan. This one was close to Edom. Knobel, *Völkertafel*, p. 267.

⁵ A general name in this place for the wandering tribes of Arabia.

⁶ Isaiah x. 5 to xii. 6.

in whose hands is the staff of My indignation! I will send him against Judah, an impious nation, and give him a charge against a people who have incurred My wrath—to take the spoil and carry off the plunder, and tread them down like the mire of the streets—that they may in their trouble be led back to Me.

“But Assyria does not purpose to be merely My instrument, and his heart does not so intend: his thought is only to destroy and root up nation after nation, to extend his own glory. I, Jehovah, am no more to him than the idols of the heathen. For he says ‘Are not my princes kings; do they not bear the title of kings; are they not, many of them, kings whom I have subdued; am not I, thence, called a king of kings—the Great King?’¹ Is not Calno, in Babylonia,² utterly destroyed like Carchemish,³ the great capital of the Hittite empire on the Euphrates? Has not Hamath, on the Orontes,⁴ fallen before me as Arpad, near Aleppo?⁵ Has not Samaria perished before my armies as Damascus did earlier? As my hand has reached these, the kingdoms of gods helpless to protect them against me—though their images were more in number than those of Samaria and Jerusalem⁶—can I not do to Jerusalem and her helpless gods⁷ as I have done to Samaria and hers?”⁸

¹ Isa. xxxvi. 4. Hos. v. 13; viii. 10. Ezek. xxvi. 7. Dan. ii. 37.

² Site unknown. So utterly had the city been destroyed that it is not mentioned in classical antiquity. See Schrader, art. *Calno*, in *Riehm*; also *Keilinschriften*, p. 250.

³ The site of this great commercial emporium of the Hittites was discovered by George Smith. It was at Hierapolis, on the Euphrates. See p. 375. The Maneh of Gargamis (Carchemish) was a standard of weight in Western Asia. The city rose again for a time as an Assyrian stronghold, after Sennacherib had overthrown Tyre.

⁴ Still an important town under the name of Hamath.

⁵ *Riehm*, art. *Arpad*.

⁶ Samaria and Jerusalem had gods, among whom Sargon reckons Jehovah, but not so many as other nations had; every village in a heathen country had its god.

⁷ Jehovah is classed with the “helpless gods” by the Assyrian king.

⁸ Images of Baal and Astarte, and also Asherahs, with the

"But, when Jehovah has finished all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem—then, says He, will I visit in wrath the proud acts of the king of Assyria's heart, and the boasting of his haughty looks. For he says, 'I have done all this by the strength of my own hand, and by my wisdom; for I am wise. I have swept away the boundaries of nations. I have plundered their treasures, and, like a god, cast down those that sat on thrones; and my hand has seized the riches of the nations as one plunders a nest. Like one who gathers the eggs in a forsaken nest, which has no parent birds to defend it, or move the wing, or open the bill, or cry in its behalf, so have I gathered all the earth, no one resisting me! All seemed as if left for me to take; the gods, their protectors, having fled!'

"Shall the axe thus boast against Him who hews with it? Shall the saw magnify itself against Him that wields it? Shall the rod bear itself as if it were not a mere piece of wood? Therefore shall the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, send leanness among the well nourished warriors of the Great King, and beneath his glory shall be kindled a burning like that of a flaming brand. The Light of Israel¹ shall Himself be the fire, the Holy One of Israel the flame, and shall kindle and devour the army of the Great King, like thorns and briers, in one day.² Jehovah shall consume his glory as the fire sweeps over both the forest and the garden ground. I shall destroy his glory, both soul and body; his whole empire shall perish; it shall pine away like a man mortally sick. And what are left of the trees of his forest shall be so few—his host shall so utterly vanish, that a child may write the names of the survivors.

"And it will come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and those of the House of Jacob that have escaped, shall no longer lean upon him that smote them, but shall put themselves under the protection of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant of Jacob shall return, in heart, to the mighty God. For though Thy people, O Israel, were once like the sand of the

"calves," besides. The gods of Samaria are called here "nothings" = "elilim": those of Jerusalem, Atzabim = "cut" or "made things."

¹ Jehovah.

² Literally fulfilled in the fate of Sennacherib.

sea, only a remnant of them shall return. Destruction of most of them is determined, and that as a righteous punishment, sweeping through like a flood! For the Lord Jehovah of Hosts shall carry out a judicial destruction, through the whole land, as His firm decision.

"Therefore, thus says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, Fear not, My people, who dwell in Zion, because of Assyria, who smites thee with a rod, and lifts up his staff against thee, as the taskmasters once did in Egypt. For in a very little while My indignation against Judah will cease, and My anger shall be turned against the oppressor, to his destruction. For Jehovah will lift up a scourge to lash him, as he smote Midian at the rock of Oreb,¹ and as His rod was lifted up at the Red Sea, when he drowned the Egyptians in its depths. On that day the burden laid on your back by Assyria shall be taken off, and his yoke removed from your neck; and it will be finally cast away by you in your strength."²

The prophet now sees before him the Assyrian invasion, in inspired vision.

"He advances to Aiath, at the head of the pass from the Jordan,³ he advances by Migron—"the precipice;"—he stores up his baggage at Michmash; they go through the narrow defile; they make their camp at Geba; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees!⁴ Shriek aloud O daughter of Gallim!⁵ Give ear, O Laishah;⁶ echo back her cry, O Anathoth!⁷ Madmenah⁸ flees;

¹ Judges vii. 25.

² Paraphrase embodying the sense. The metaphor is taken from an ox yoked to field work by its master.

³ They invade the country by the Wady Kelt and the Wady Suweinit. See vol. iii. p. 97.

⁴ This is the route directly south-east towards Jerusalem. Michmash is 1,990 feet above the sea. Aiath is probably Ai Migron, "the precipice," is not yet identified.

⁵ = Springs. Unknown. Apparently, like the rest, in Benjamin.

⁶ Not Laish or Dan, in the far north, but some village of Benjamin, now vanished. Laishah = the lion.

⁷ = Answers (to prayer). An hour and a quarter N. of Jerusalem.

⁸ = A dunghill. Unknown.

the inhabitants of Gebim¹ save their goods by flight. He will rest a day at Nob² to prepare for the attack on Jerusalem. Thence will he shake his hand, vowing vengeance against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem!

"But, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, shall hew down the crown of his branches with a dreadful crash; the lordly warriors, the lofty trees of his forest-like army will be cut down; the haughty humbled; the rank and file—the undergrowth of that forest—shall Jehovah hew down with iron; the Lebanon-like wood of Assyria's array shall fall by One that is mighty."

Assyria thus ignominiously defeated, and Judah delivered, the prophet sees in the distance³ the coming of Him who shall restore the Theocracy to more than its ancient glory — the Messiah of God. It shows the feelings of the best of the people that the Messianic kingdom should thus constantly rise in the thoughts of Isaiah—their grandest representative.

"And there shall come forth a shoot from the decayed stock of Jesse, and a green sucker spring from its roots. The Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and power; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And the fear of Jehovah shall be the very breath of His life.⁴ And He shall not give decisions from mere outward appearances, or the rank or wealth of the suitor, nor give sentence from report, nor from the conflicting statements of opposite sides—for He has the spirit of knowledge and understanding to see truth at once. Therefore He will judge the helpless with righteousness, and give sentence with equity in favour of the suffering down-trodden in the land, but He will smite the tyrant⁵ with the rod of His mouth, and slay the ungodly with

¹ = The cisterns, or the locusts. Unknown.

² = A height. Fifty-five minutes N. of Jerusalem, in a pleasant valley.

³ Isaiah xi.

⁴ So, in effect, *Herder, Ewald, Naegelsbach.*

⁵ *Lagarde. Cheyne.*

the breath of His lips. Righteousness shall be the girdle of His waist, and faithfulness the girdle of His loins.¹

“And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall go together to the pastures; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat bruised² straw like the ox. And the child at the breast shall play beside the hole of the asp,³ and the weaned child shall stretch out his hand on the hole of the great yellow viper.⁴ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the bed of the sea.

“And on that day the Stem from the root of Jesse shall stand conspicuous from afar, as a banner to gather the people; the heathen also shall stream to Him, and the place where He makes His abode shall be glorious.⁶

“And it shall come to pass on that day that Jehovah shall stretch out His hand a second time—for He did it once before in Egypt—to redeem to Himself⁷ the remnant of His people which still survives—from Assyria, and from Lower Egypt, and from Upper Egypt, and from Ethiopia, and from Elam, east of the

¹ The words translated, “loins” and “reins,” both mean the loins, or the part round which the girdle was worn—the seat of strength.

² The teben or broken and softened straw from the threshing floor. See pp. 361, 372, 390.

³ The pethen — apparently the deadly cobra, which is well known in Southern Palestine. It lurks in holes and walls of houses and fissures of the rocks. *Tristram*, p. 271.

⁴ Dr. Tristram (*N. H. of B.*, p. 275) saw one spring at a quail and miss its body, but the bird fluttered only a few yards and then fell dying. The viper had made a very small puncture in the flesh of one of its wings.

⁵ Virg., *Ecl.*, iv. 22; v. 60. Horat., *Epod.*, xvi. 30. Romans viii. 22.

⁶ By the concourse of nations to His “resting place,” and by the righteousness of the judicial decisions given by Him there, to all.

⁷ Lit. “to buy back,” so as to have them for His own again.

Tigris, and from Babylonia, and from Hamath on the north, and from the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean — lands to which they have been carried off as slaves.¹ For Jehovah will set up the Messiah as a rallying banner for the heathen, and He will gather together the dispersed children of Judah from the four sides of the earth. Then will the jealousy of Ephraim against Judah vanish, and those of Judah who would vex Ephraim shall be rooted out, Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, nor Judah disquiet Ephraim.

“Instead of this, Ephraim and Judah, together, in loving alliance, shall go forth to new conquests. They shall pounce down on the shoulder² of the Philistines, towards the west, like eagles on their prey. They shall together spoil the sons of the East.³ Edom and Moab shall be the prey of their hand; the children of Ammon shall obey them.

“And Jehovah shall smite asunder the waters of the Nile mouths,⁴ to let the Hebrews return from Egypt again, dryshod, as they once did through the Red Sea; and He shall move His hand over the river Euphrates, and part it, by the glow of His breath, into seven channels, so that men shall go over in their sandals, and thus a path shall be opened from Assyria for the still surviving remnant of His people, like that made for Israel when it marched up out of the land of Egypt.

“In that day Judah shall say:⁵ ‘I thank Thee, Jehovah, for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will henceforth trust in Him alone, not in man, and I shall not fear! For Jehovah Jah is my strength and my song; He has been my salvation!’

“Then, as, in the feast of Tabernacles, ye draw water for a drink-offering from the springs of Siloah, ye shall with joy draw blessing and favour from the salvation God has wrought for you, as from an exhaustless fountain. And ye shall say in that

¹ By Shishak, Pul, Sargon, and others, including the slave dealers of Edom, Philistia, and Tyre.

² This word may be also translated “border,” or “hill.”

³ The wandering Arab tribes, which so often invaded Palestine. Gen. xxix. 1. Judges vi. 3; vii. 12; viii. 10. 1 Kings iv. 30. Job i. 3.

⁴ *Diestel.*

⁵ Isaiah xii.

day—‘Give thanks to Jehovah; sound aloud His name! Make known His great deeds to the nations; tell that His name is highly exalted! Sing with the harp to Jehovah, for mighty deeds hath He done: let them be known through the whole earth! Sing aloud, yea shout, thou daughter¹ of Zion; for great in thy midst is the Holy One of Israel.’”

¹ Inhabitrress.





CHAPTER XVI.

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS.

THE excitement caused by the Assyrian invasion¹ must have been intense, and the joy at the escape of the kingdom from destruction by Sargon unbounded, but it was speedily changed into renewed alarm at the serious illness of Hezekiah, who was still in the prime of his age, and as yet had no son to succeed him. A carbuncle or other inflammatory swelling,² brought on perhaps by the mental anxiety he had lately suffered, seemed likely to prove fatal. It was soon known in Jerusalem that Isaiah had been summoned to the royal sick chamber to tell the sufferer, by his prophetic foresight, what would be the result, and that he had announced to him from Jehovah that he must set his house in order and prepare for death. Universal consternation prevailed; nor was the grief of others more acute than that of Hezekiah himself. Clinging to life, and almost despairing of his country; uncheered moreover by the fulness of that hope vouchsafed by Him who has brought immortality to light through the Gospel;³

¹ 711 to 709.

² 2 Kings xx. 1 ff. Isa. xxxviii. 1 ff. Dr. Mead supposes it was a fever followed by an abscess.

³ 2 Tim. i. 10.

he turned his face from the light of day, which he was so soon to leave, to the blank wall, and "wept sore." That he had no heir to the throne, to reign after him, must have deepened his grief.¹ He had just passed through great trouble and had seemed about to enjoy a lengthened "rest," but, instead of this, the grave was opening before him. His tender nature shrank at the prospect, and he passionately appealed to God that he might yet be spared. "Remember now, O Jehovah," cried he, amidst his sobs, "how I have walked before Thee in truth, and with my whole heart, and have done what was good in Thy sight." Nor was his prayer unheard. The faithful Isaiah had scarcely left the sick-bed before the gloomy announcement just made was withdrawn. Before he reached the gate of the Middle Town, to go down to the Lower City,² an inspired intimation directed him to return and tell the king that his prayer was answered; that he would in three days be able to return thanks personally in the temple for his recovery; that fifteen years would be added to his life; and that, when the Assyrians, hereafter, should come again to seize Jerusalem, it would be divinely delivered. Simple means, blessed by God, were sufficient. The usual Eastern remedy of a poultice of figs, which is still used for the same purpose in Turkey and Persia,³ was laid on the tumour and gave instant relief. To cheer the sick man, a sign or divine pledge of his complete recovery was also vouchsafed. Ahaz had built a lofty sun-dial, in the Babylonian fashion, at once, perhaps, to serve in the worship of Baal and to measure time. It

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, X. ii. 1.

² *Delitzsch.*

³ *Morier.* Harmer's *Observ.*, vol. i. p. 389. Gesenius, *Iesaja*, p. 979. The Greeks and Romans also used figs in this way. *Celsius*, ii. 373.

may have been a lofty structure, on the ascending steps of which the shadow of the sun fell, in regular advance; or it may have been a horizontal disk on which minute steps or degrees were marked.¹ In either case the shadow was to go back ten of these grades. How this was brought about by God we are not told, but it is striking to find that a partial eclipse of the sun, visible at Jerusalem, took place on September 26th, 713, and that it would produce exactly such a phenomenon as Scripture records.²

To this illness of Hezekiah we are indebted for an interesting fragment of the literature of the time, throwing a striking light on the prevailing religious ideas. A psalm composed by the king, and doubtless sung

¹ *Thenius*.

² *Thenius*. Mr. Bosanquet says of an eclipse visible in Jerusalem on the 11th January, B.C. 689, that "it would have the effect of causing a shadow from the south, cast on a staircase, to recede to the extent described in the history, even ten steps, and that with a deliberate motion not to be mistaken, extending over twenty minutes." *Trans. of Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 36.

The twelve years of Merodach Baladan extended from B.C. 721 to 710—the 16th year of Hezekiah. Sargon, in his annals, accuses him of having sought foreign alliances,* and the mission to Jerusalem may have been an instance among others. Cheyne thinks the date of the royal sickness must have been about B.C. 713–712.† Schrader,‡ however, assigns it to about B.C. 704–3, just before Sennacherib's invasion, but there are no special reasons for his doing so. Strachey§ supposes it to have been a punishment for the want of faith in God, who, as he thinks, had recently delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrian. Hezekiah should not have lent an ear to overtures of alliance with heathen Babylon. But the earlier dates accord with historical fact and with the recorded solar eclipse of B.C. 713. The later, throw everything into confusion.

* *Records of the Past*, vol. vii. p. 41.

† *Isaiah*, vol. i. p. 195.

‡ *Keilinschriften*, p. 218.

§ *Hebrew Politics*, etc., pp. 295 ff.

amidst jubilant music, on his appearance in the temple to render public thanksgiving to God for his recovery, has come down to us.

"I said," it begins,¹ "in the quiet of my days, when my troubles are just over, and while my sun is still at midday,² I must enter the gates of the grave. I am made to come short, by divine wrath, of the due remainder of my years. I said—I shall no longer see Jehovah—no longer see Him in the land of the living! I shall no more look upon men, when I descend among the dwellers in the silent land."³

"The tent of my body is plucked up and borne from me, like the tent of a wandering shepherd when his encampment removes. My life is rolled up as a weaver rolls together his web. Jehovah is about to cut it off, as a rolled up web is cut off from the loom.⁴ To-day, or at latest before another morning, Thou wilt make an end of me! When night came I wore through it in pain, till the light, crying, 'I shall die before morning'—for it seemed, in my agony, as if Jehovah were breaking all my bones, as the lion crushes the bones of his prey. Like a swallow or a crane so did I keep twittering: I moaned like a dove: with eyes dim with tears I kept looking to heaven, as I cried, 'O Jehovah, I am sore pressed; death comes on me like a stern creditor who must be paid; Lord, satisfy him for me, and spare my life!'

"What shall I say? How shall I thank God, for He has not only promised through His prophet to restore me, but has fulfilled the promise! I shall enter Thy temple day by day, all my remaining years, to thank Thee with solemn gladness; for the recollection of the bitterness of my soul in these hours, now over, shall never leave me! O Lord, by such lowly remembrance of Thy goodness do men's spirits live; thus alone comes the true life of the soul. Since Thou seest that I feel this, Thou wilt perfectly restore me, and let me live.

"Behold, I suffered very bitterly, but God has turned it to good, for Thou hast in love delivered my soul from the nothingness of the grave. Thou didst cast all my sins behind Thy back,

¹ Isaiah xxxviii. 10 ff.
different renderings.

² He was about 40. I embody

³ Lit. "of ceasing."

⁴ Lit. "warp."

so that, not seeing them, Thou couldst save me from death, their desert.

"For the regions of the dead¹ cannot praise Thee; death cannot give Thee thanks. They that are gone into the grave cannot hope for a proof of Thy goodness, such as I have received. The living, the living, he only can praise Thee, as I do this day, having been saved from death! Henceforth, I will make known to my children the faithfulness God has shown to their father.

"Jehovah, indeed, is still ready to save me in days to come; therefore I and mine will sing psalms of thanksgiving all the days of our life, to the music of harps, in the house of Jehovah."

The news of Hezekiah's illness and wonderful recovery speedily reached even distant countries, and, among others, Babylonia. There, Merodach Baladan—"the son given by the god Merodach,"²—was still defiant, though Sargon had been fiercely trying to crush him for many years. Clutching, in his despair, at any hope, it seemed possible that Hezekiah, who had already given Sargon some trouble, might be disposed to form an alliance with Babylon, and thus in some measure weaken the strength of the great enemy. An embassy was therefore sent to Jerusalem³ with an autograph letter from Merodach Baladan, and the usual costly gifts with which Eastern monarchs always approach each other. The pretended object of the mission was to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery, but its real design was to form a treaty offensive and defensive with him. Such an honour to the king of a small country like Judah must have been very flattering, and was acknowledged by Hezekiah with every circumstance of Oriental courtesy. The strangers were shown all the sights of the kingdom, including, among others, the royal magazines, arsenal, and treasury.

¹ Sheol.

² Schrader. *Mühlau*.

³ In 711 or 710. 2 Kings xx. 12 ff. Isa. xxxix. 1 ff.

The whole military and fiscal arrangements of Judah, in fact, were opened to their inspection, as if to let them know that its support was worth their king's seeking.

To the simple and incautious Hezekiah such a disclosure of his secret resources before the ambassadors of a prince whose reign had been a constant and unsuccessful struggle against Sargon, his own great enemy, seemed innocent and harmless. But Isaiah, his faithful counsellor, knew better than his master. The sudden rise and fall of Oriental empires was often startling. Their provinces were always ready to throw off the yoke imposed on them only by resistless violence. The life of Sargon indeed had been spent in putting down revolts, from Media to Tyre, from Armenia to Arabia. Merodach Baladan's tenacity in resistance showed a vitality in his claims which might hereafter reverse the relations between him and Nineveh. Above all, prophetic insight corroborated natural prescience. It had been revealed to the seer that Babylon would one day be supreme, and that Judah would then suffer for the vanity of Hezekiah, by utter ruin. Ever fearless in his duties as the servant of God, this could not be withheld, though Hezekiah was at once his friend and his king. Once more the black mantle of the prophet was seen in the private chamber of the palace, and the monarch had to listen while his reprover told him, that he was sent from Jehovah to foretell the future destruction of the kingdom, by that very power whose representatives had thus received the royal confidence. The palace would be plundered; the national wealth seized; and his own descendants carried off to be servants in the palace of the king of Babylon. The blow was heavy, but it fell on a heart duly humble. "Good is the word of Jehovah," replied the king, "which thou hast spoken"—an answer

followed by the mitigating assurance that the catastrophe would not happen in his own days.

It is to this mission from Babylon that we owe perhaps the grandest chapters of the great prophet. Nineveh was the one mighty power in Western Asia. Vast regions trembled under its gigantic shadow. For more than a century to come it was to be the mistress of the world, for it only fell, before the Medes and Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar, between the years B.C. 609 and 606,¹ while the ruin of Babylon itself by the arms of Cyrus did not take place till the year B.C. 538. But what no man could have predicted was revealed to Isaiah.²

"Raise high a signal flag on an unwooded mountain," cried he in one of his orations,³ as if addressing his people, when already, to his prophetic vision, captives in Babylon; "lift it up, to guide the enemy to an attack on the great city. Cry aloud to them as

¹ Schrader in *Riehm*, art. *Nineve* and *Nebucadnezzar*.

² I am aware of the theory of some scholars that the prophecy should be referred to some unknown author of a much later date than Isaiah. But the grounds on which this is proposed seem quite unsatisfactory, and rest, essentially, on a sceptical theory, that there is no such a thing in Scripture as prophecy, in the sense of prediction. The criticisms which would invalidate the claim of Isaiah to the authorship of the 13th and 14th chapters of his prophecies, are only such as ingenuity could easily invent with respect to any writing of an ancient author. Nor can the critics agree among themselves in their literary surgery. One is reminded of the heated and often wild controversy respecting Homer, raised by Wolf at the close of last century. For more than a generation the air was full of the dust raised by fierce disputants; but how completely has it now subsided, leaving the great Homeric poems to be regarded as essentially the work of their reputed author, with here and there a doubtful couplet; earlier materials having possibly been utilized in creating the splendid whole.

³ Isa. xiii.-xiv. 13.

they come near; wave your hand to them in welcome; encourage them to burst through the gates of the Tyrants.¹

"I, Jehovah, have commanded my warriors, consecrated to the battle by sacrifices: I have summoned my Mighty Ones to execute my anger: my heroes, proudly rejoicing in the battle!

The prophet now hears the sounds of the gathering hosts.

"Hark! A noise in the mountains of Media,² as of a great people; hark! the mingled tumult of assembling kingdoms and nations!³ Jehovah of Hosts musters the legions of war! They come from a far country; from the end of the heavens;⁴ even Jehovah and the instruments of His indignation, to destroy the whole Babylonian empire!

"Howl, ye Babylonians, as the host approaches! For the day of Jehovah is near. It shall come with destroying violence from El Shaddai—the Almighty! All hands shall hang spiritless at the thought of it; every man's heart shall melt. They shall be dismayed; distress and anguish shall seize them, they shall groan as a woman in her labour; they shall stare one at another; their faces shall glow like flames with terror.

"Behold the day of Jehovah approaches; terrible in its fury and consuming wrath, to devastate the earth, and root out sinners from it.⁵ For the stars of heaven and its constellations⁶ shall

¹ The Medes and Persians were the assailants. The gates of the Tyrants were those of Babylon, the harsh lords of the captivity of Judah.

² Cyrus attacked Babylonia first from Media.

³ The Medes, Persians, Armenians, and Chaldæans. *Xen., Cyrop.*, iii. 3. *Jer.* li. 27.

⁴ Media—a very remote, unknown land, to the Jews—a land which seemed to be where the sky touches the earth.

⁵ Babylon had oppressed Judah, the people of God, and held the whole earth in its tyranny. They are, therefore, pre-eminently "sinners." Others, also, who had offended God would perish in the awful war.

⁶ The wandering Arab tribes, to which the Hebrews were allied, had early given names to the constellations which shone over

hide their light before the on-rushing storm; the sun shall be darkened at its rising, and the light of the moon, by night, will be shrouded. I will punish the world for its evil; the wicked for their iniquity; and I will put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the Tyrants! And so terrible will be the slaughter that I will make men scarcer than fine gold; scarcer than the golden bars of Ophir. I will shake the heavens, in carrying out these judgments, and the earth shall move, quaking, from its place, at the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts, and the day of His burning anger! Then shall they be like the hunted gazelle; like sheep with no one to gather them; the whole multitude of strangers of Babylon, shall flee like these; each man to his own people, and to his own land, as the Medes approach. Every one who has not fled, but is found still in Babylon when it is taken, will be thrust through; every one taken shall fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to pieces against the stones before their eyes; their houses sacked, and their wives outraged.

"Behold, I shall stir up the Medes¹ against Babylon; a barbarous and cruel race which has not yet come to set value on silver, and has no pleasure in gold. Their bowmen² shall strike down the young men; they will have no compassion on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will have no pity even on children.

"Thus shall Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the pride and boast of the Chaldæans, be like Sodom and Gomorrah which God overthrew. It shall lie uninhabited for ever; undwelt in from generation to generation. Not even the wandering Arabs shall pitch their tents there, nor shall the shepherd tribes camp in it. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; the houses shall be

them in the wilderness pastures by night. One was the Ostrich, others, the Camel, the Tent, the Pitcher, and so on. See on this, very fully, Gesenius, *Iesaja*, vol. i. pp. 457 ff.

¹ The Medes, only, are mentioned because they were the chief power till the time of Cyrus; the Persians being subordinate. The "Medes" may be understood as including the various Aryan nations of ancient Irân, or Persia, in its widest sense.

² The Medes and Persians were famous as bowmen. The bow was indeed their chief weapon. *Herod.*, vii. 61. *Strabo*, xi 525. *Cyrop.*, ii. 1, 7. *Jer.* i. 42.

full of howling creatures,¹ and ostriches shall dwell there, and the goat-like demons of the wilds will dance there.² And wailing beasts shall howl by night in their palaces, where hitherto had been only joyous song; and jackals in the pleasant mansions. The time of Babylon is near; her days shall not be prolonged.

"For Jehovah³ will have mercy on the exiles of Jacob, and will again choose the banished Israel for Himself, as He did before, in Egypt, and plant them again in their own land. And the alien shall join himself to them, and build up their strength, and will attach himself to the House of Jacob as a proselyte. And they will take the Babylonians, and bring them with them to Palestine, and the House of Israel shall hold them, in Jehovah's land, for men slaves and women slaves; and they that were captives shall hold captive their former masters, and shall be lords over their former oppressors.

"And it shall come to pass in the day when Jehovah gives thee rest, O Judah, from thy sorrow, from thy distress, and from the hard bondage which they made thee endure, that thou shalt raise this song of triumph over the king of Babylon, and say—

"How has the Oppressor ceased to oppress! how is his raging stilled! Jehovah has broken the hard rule of the wicked, the sceptre of the tyrants, which fiercely, with blow upon blow, smote down the nations, and trampled under foot the peoples, with a rage that never ceased! The whole earth is now at rest and quiet; men break out into singing. Even the very cypresses and cedars of Lebanon rejoice at thy fall. 'Since thou hast been laid low,' say they, 'no feller comes up against us.'⁴ The kingdom of the dead, beneath, is in commotion, to meet thee at thy coming. It stirs up the shades on thy account; all the former mighty ones⁵ of the earth. It has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. They all stir themselves and say, 'Art thou also

¹ Jackals, wolves, owls, etc. ² See Luke xi. 24. See p. 19.

³ Isaiah xiv.

⁴ The Assyrian inscriptions often mention royal expeditions to hew down cypresses and cedars in Lebanon.

⁵ Lit., "goats of the earth,"—the leaders of the flock of men, who go before the people as the leader goes before the flock. Zech. x. 3. Ps. lxxviii. 30. Jer. l. 8.

become weak as we; art thou become like us, poor shades'! Thy pomp is cast down into the kingdom of the dead, and the murmur of thy harps; instead of thy tapestries and silken pillows, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee!

"How art thou fallen from heaven, thou shining star, Son of the Dawn! how art thou cast down from heaven and fallen to earth, who didst lay low the nations! Thou saidst in thy heart, 'I will be a god and will mount to heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars, where God dwells; I will sit down in the assembly of the gods on their sacred mountain, in the recesses of the north.¹ I will ascend to the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High!'

"Yet, now, thou art brought down to the kingdoms of the dead, to the deepest darkness of the grave! They that see thee, look narrowly and gaze earnestly at thee, saying, 'Is this the man that made the earth tremble, that made kingdoms quake; that made the world a wilderness, destroying its cities and leading off their populations; who released not his prisoners, to return to their homes!

"'All the kings of the nations lie in honour, each in his own tomb. But thou art cast away far from thy burial place, like a worthless pruned branch; thy only winding sheet the bodies of those slain around thee in battle, pierced by the sword; among them thou liest, as a carcase trodden under foot. Thou shalt not be joined in burial with thy ancestors who have gone down to the strong bosom of the grave, because thou hast destroyed thy land by thy tyranny, and slain thy people by thy constant wars. The seed of evildoers shall for ever be without a name.'²

"Prepare ye a bath of blood for his sons, for the guilt of their fathers, that they may not rise up and conquer the lands, or fill the circle of the earth with fresh oppressors! For I will rise against them, saith Jehovah of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon

¹ Orientals, in antiquity, imagined that the dwelling of the gods was in the extreme north, on a mountain reaching into the sky. This was called Meru by the people of India, and Albordj by the Persians. *Gesenius*, vol. ii. p. 316. *Lassen*, *Indische Alterthums-kunde*, vol. i. p. 34.

² End of the song.

all its population; their name and its inheritors; the branch and the twig, saith Jehovah! I will make it the possession of the bittern and swamps of water, and sweep it utterly away with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of Hosts."¹

Sargon's last triumph over Babylon took place in 710, and a satrap was appointed over it in 709. But the scope of this magnificent prophecy extended into the distant future; for the great rival of Nineveh again revolted at Sargon's death, and was destroyed by Sennacherib, in 691. Even then, however, Babylonia was not finally subdued, and it was not till the reign of Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, that it was really incorporated into the Assyrian empire. Its subsequent rise, before the destruction of Nineveh, will be related hereafter.

Meanwhile, Isaiah, in his public utterances, frequently alluded to the mission from Merodach Baladan; if only to warn the king and people against any future alliance with heathen powers. Roused by the vision of all that his country would suffer at the hands of Babylon, he poured forth predictions of the ultimate fall of the oppressor, as if in this he might find some consolation. One of these orations, if we may so speak, bears the superscription of the Burden² of the Desert of the Sea; the Euphrates being often, like the Nile, spoken of thus; perhaps from its periodical overflow of the vast plains on its sides, which, but for its waters would be, as indeed they now are, a waste. Babylon, in fact, stood in the

¹ The utter desolation of the ruins of Babylon, the very site of which was unknown till our own day, is the best commentary on the literal exactness of this wonderful prophecy.

² The word "Massa," translated here "Burden," means primarily, a "lifting up," as of the voice, and hence should be rendered "prophecy," or "saying." It has a secondary meaning of "bearing," from burdens being "lifted up" before being carried. Hence it is often translated "a burden."

desert, though the great river turned as much of the plain as it was made to irrigate, into richly productive soil.

"As tempests from the south,¹ sweeping along, desolation come like a storm of war from the desert, the land of terrors. A gloomy vision is revealed to me! The plunderers spoil, and the wasters lay waste—wild and fierce enemies are coming up against Babylon! Go up against her, O Elam;² besiege her, O Media!³ The sighing she has caused by her tyranny will I make to cease! The vision of all that is to happen fills my loins with pain; the terrors of it have taken hold of me like the sorrows of a woman in labour; my senses fail me; I can neither hear nor see. My head beats wildly; terror has unmanned me; even the cool evening which I loved is a time of trembling!"

Babylon will be at ease, in fancied security; its nobles feasting and drinking, when the city is stormed.

"They are preparing the table; spreading the coverlets on the dining couches; they are eating and drinking. But while thus carousing the cry bursts in on them: 'Arise ye princes, anoint the shield.'⁴

"For thus hath Jehovah said to me: 'Go, set a watchman on the look-out tower. Let him tell you what he sees.'

"And he saw troops of horse, in pairs; troops of baggage asses; troops of baggage camels. And he set himself eagerly to note their number, their description, and the direction they were taking. Then he cried aloud, like a lion, 'O Lord I stand on the watch tower all the day I keep my place here through the night, and lo, there come troops of horse, in pairs.'⁵ Then He answered

¹ Storms from the south were the most terrible in Babylon. Isa. xxi. 1-10.

² See vol. i. p. 256.

³ See vol. i. p. 233. Media stretched nearly from the south end of the Caspian Sea to the farther slopes of the great mountain range which extends from Armenia, east of the Tigris, to the Gulf of Oman, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

⁴ Shields were greased or oiled before the battle, to make them shine and to toughen the leather.

⁵ The Persians were chiefly cavalry.

and said, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the images of her gods are cast, broken, to the ground.'¹

"O my banished children—ye exiles—threshed and trampled on by the tyrant, as corn is on the threshing floor—that which I have heard from Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, have I now declared to you."

After the defeat of Merodach Baladan in 710, Sargon remained for a time in Babylon. Great sacrifices to the gods; the reception of envoys from many kings, bearing their tribute; the planning and digging new canals of irrigation, to add to the glory of the city,² and much else, occupied him for some months, but he had to hurry off to fresh campaigns against Media and Elam.³ A splendid palace at Dur Sargina, now Khorsabad, near Nineveh, was meanwhile being built under his directions, as a quiet and magnificent retreat for his declining years. His pride in its grandeur is seen in the lengthened accounts given in the annals, of the precious woods used in its construction; its furniture of gold, silver, copper, and costly stones; the sculptured lions and bulls at the gates; and the lines of alabaster slabs engraved with the story of his deeds, that adorned the walls of its countless rooms.⁴

But the avenger was at hand. He who had laid kingdoms waste was to be called to his account. The mighty palace was dedicated in 706, and in 705 Sargon lay on its floor, murdered.

Sennacherib,⁵ a younger son of the conqueror, presently occupied the vacant throne. Inferior in political ability to his father, he was not less ambitious, and spent his life

¹ The Persians abhorred idols.

² Menant, *Annales*, p. 173.

³ See vol. i. p. 256.

⁴ Menant, pp. 178–9.

⁵ Sen (the moon god) richly blesses the brothers. *Schrader*.

in military expeditions on the grandest scale. Renowned over the earth in his days as the great destroyer,¹ he knew no higher policy than force. Bringing only misery to the nations he conquered, they broke into constant revolt, as opportunity offered. Lust of power, cruelty, pride, and arrogance, the attributes of Oriental despots as a class, were developed in excess in his case.² All that is said by Isaiah, in his magnificent fourteenth chapter, of the king of Babylon, might be applied to Sennacherib. The splendour of the palace at Kouyunjik, by which he sought to eclipse that of his father at Khorsabad, its magnificent halls and entrances, its vast extent, occupying a quarter of Nineveh,³ are attested alike by his own boastful inscriptions, and by its far stretching ruins. Under him Assyria reached almost its highest glory.

The excitement that followed the murder of Sargon, as the news spread from land to land, created a wide harvest of troubles for the new king. Merodach Baladan at once drove away the Assyrian Viceroy, on Sargon's death, and Sennacherib had to spend his first year⁴ in a campaign against Babylon, which, in alliance with Elam, resisted him. Once more, however, the patriot Chaldæan was defeated and had to flee, and Sennacherib entered his capital in triumph. A royal favourite, who had been brought up, as the inscription tell us, "like a little dog in the palace"⁵ of Sargon, was set over the province, to

¹ Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 118.

² Smith's *History of Assyria*, p. 126.

³ *Layard*, pp. 138, 147. Rawlinson; *Anct. Monarchies*, vol. ii. pp. 428, 466. *Menant*, p. 229. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. pp. 54 ff.

⁴ 705-4.

⁵ Schrader, art. *Sanherib*, in *Rehm*. The figure is one of endearment.

be overthrown again in three years by Merodach Bala-dan, and Sennacherib, after subduing and devastating Chaldæa, returned to Nineveh laden with spoil. Campaigns against Elam and Media occupied the second and third year; but in the fourth he was forced to turn his armies once more to Syria. The long respite which it had enjoyed since Sargon's invasion of 711 was at last at an end.





CHAPTER XVII.

SENNACHERIB'S CAMPAIGN.

ROUSED by the death of Sargon to a new effort to drive back the Assyrians from their dangerous proximity to Egypt, and to escape the tribute now paid for a number of years, Seti, the reigning king of Tanis, and the minor Egyptian princes, in alliance with Tirhakah,¹ king of Ethiopia, reviving the policy of his predecessors, stirred up Palestine against Sennacherib by promising aid against him. The traditions of Egyptian greatness still acted like a spell on the neighbouring populations, and any venture, however desperate, seemed justifiable, that promised freedom from the hated oppression of Assyria. The kings of Phenicia and of the Philistine country, of the Orontes, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, were once more allies, refusing tribute and prepared to defend themselves, with the aid of Egypt and Tirhakah. Western Asia was all aflame, and the

¹ 2 Kings xix. 9. The inscriptions of Sennacherib mention the king of Meroë (Ethiopia) as the great Egyptian opponent of Assyria, and the name of the one reigning in the time of Assurbanipal, the grandson of Sennacherib, is given in the inscriptions as Tar-ku-u—the equivalent of our Tirhakah. It is easy to suppose that there may have been successive kings of the name. *Keilinschriften*, p. 203.

rebellion, if not suppressed, might spread through the empire.

The crisis on the banks of the Tigris had given a respite to these revolted States in the west; but they had left it unimproved and had formed no plan of united action. It was not till B.C. 702-1 that the legions of Assyria were on their march towards Palestine—Sennacherib at their head. He entered the country, as usual, from the north. His long array of chariots, horsemen, and archers threaded the recesses of Lebanon, and scaled its heights. Its majestic cedars and cypresses, to use the language of the prophet, shrieked as they felt the fire at their roots and saw the fall of their companions,¹ levelled by the engineers of the invader to make machines of war, or mighty beams for the palaces of Nineveh. Where water was scarce, countless wells were dug, or those covered over by the enemy reopened.² Sennacherib boasted that with the sole of his foot he would dry up all the canals of Egypt, the ultimate object of his invasion. He would also, he declared, pitch his silken tent not only in the high passes of the north, but in Jerusalem itself, and profane its palace gardens, the luxurious retreats of Hezekiah's capital.³ The mountain torrents were bridged⁴ for the passage of his divisions; the rough wadys made practicable for his chariots. Descending by the gorge of the Dog River,⁵ he caused

¹ Zech. xi. 1.

² Winer, vol. i. p. 195.

³ 2 Kings xix. 23. *Thenius*. This seems a better rendering than "the highest caravanserai on Lebanon, and the garden woodland of Carmel." *Stanley*, and others. After crushing Egypt, he would turn against Jerusalem and humble it.

⁴ Isa. xxxvii. 24, 25. *Sept.*

⁵ *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 117. The stream formerly the Lycus, or Wolf River, is now called the Nahr el Kelb (Dog River). It rushes down from the mountains, clear as crystal, beneath over-

his figure to be carved on the rocks, by the side of that of Rameses II., who had passed the same way, a thousand years before, and had left a similar memento of his presence. At last the huge avalanche of war burst on the plains of Phenicia.

Sidon first felt its shock. Help was not at hand from Egypt. Elulæus, the rebel king, had to flee to Cyprus,¹ or some other island of the Levant, and a more complaisant vassal—Ethobaal—was put in his place and bound to pay the wonted tribute. The chiefs or kings of Arvad and Gebal on the north; of Ashdod on the south; and of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, terrified at the presence of such a host, or, as the inscriptions say, “at the flash of the weapons of Asshur,” Sennacherib’s god, presently submitted, and renewed their homage, kissing the feet of the Great King, presenting rich gifts and engaging to pay tribute, on seeing Sidon fall without a blow. Zedek—“the first” chief of Askalon—stood out, but was punished by being dethroned in favour of a vassal king; his whole family, in all its branches, his god, and all his property, being carried off by the Assyrians. The towns of Beth-dagon, and Joppa, with two others whose names are unknown—all four, subject to Zedek—suffered bitterly for having supported him. Hezekiah, alone, now, withheld his submission. So far, the march towards Egypt had been a triumphal progress.

The excitement in Jerusalem at these events was intense. The city was put in a state of defence like that with which it had met Sargon’s invasion ten years before. Hezekiah had again compromised himself. The Ekronites

hanging rocks, a few miles north of Beirut, and about sixty north of Tyre Kiepert’s *Map*.

¹ Sennacherib’s annals, *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 37.

had dethroned their vassal-king Padiah, who had been faithful to Assyria, and having sent him in chains to Jerusalem, he had been detained there; the city hoping for speedy aid from Tirhakah. The troops of Seti and the local Egyptian kings, under that leader, their common head, marched to its relief, but Sennacherib posted himself between them and Jerusalem, and barred their passage at the Levitical town of Eltekeh,¹ in the ancient territory of Dan.

“The king of Egypt,” say the annals,² “and the soldiers, archers, chariots and horses of Ethiopia—countless in numbers—gathered together and came to the assistance” of the people of Ekron and of Hezekiah. “They placed their battle array before me in the plains of Eltekeh and discharged their arrows; but I fought and defeated them with the weapons of Asshur, my Lord. My hands captured, in the midst of the battle, the chief of the chariots, and the sons of the king of Egypt, and the chief of the chariots of the king of Ethiopia. I attacked, took, and plundered, the towns of Eltekeh and Timnah.”³

Thus freed from fear of the Egyptian army, he turned against Ekron, which speedily fell. Padiah had been

¹ Josh. xix. 44; xxi. 23.

² *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 39.

³ In Judah. Josh. xv. 10. In the *Records of the Past* the word is incorrectly said to mean “the south,” and its position is stated to have been near the south border of Palestine. It was, on the contrary, on the northern boundary of Judah, west from Jerusalem, and half way towards Ashdod. After a time it was assigned to Dan (Josh. xix. 43); but as a rule it was held by the Philistines. It is now Tibne—a heap of ruins. Rob., *Pal.*, vol. ii. p. 599. Guérin, *Judée*, vol. ii. p. 30. Eltekeh is supposed by Conder to be the present Beit Likia, a few miles north of Libnah, in the ancient territory of Dan.

sent by Hezekiah to the Assyrian camp, on the summons of Sennacherib to deliver him, and was restored to his throne, while those who had expelled him were treated with barbarous harshness.

"The chief priests and great men who committed these crimes," say the annals, "I put to death, and hung their bodies on stakes all round the city. I gave over to slavery the people of the town who had committed sins and crimes, but spared the rest."

Orders were now given to a corps of the army to march against Jerusalem, and presently the hill passes echoed to the tramp of the Assyrian infantry and the roll of their chariots. Fire and blood marked the progress of the invaders. Forty-six of Hezekiah's fenced cities were taken by storm, and numerous castles and villages, with a large amount of material of war. The whole population that could be captured were led off as slaves, to the number of 200,150 "small and great, male and female," with "horses, mares, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep beyond counting." Hezekiah, himself, awaited the bursting of the storm in Jerusalem. There, he was very soon closely blockaded, and preparations were begun for a regular siege.

"I shut him up," says Sennacherib, "like a bird, inside Jerusalem, his royal city, and constructed siege towers against him, for he had given command to renew the defences of the great gate of the city."

In this terrible crisis, as in the past, Isaiah, who was in the town, raised his voice fearlessly to calm the terrors of his fellow citizens and prevent universal panic and dismay. No danger appalled him. With the Assyrian before the walls, his confidence in Jehovah as the deliverer of His people never for a moment faltered.

"Jehovah of hosts has sworn," cried he; "'As I have devised

so, surely, shall it come to pass; what I have purposed, that shall stand—to scatter to the winds the Assyrian in My land; to tread him under foot on My mountains! Then shall his yoke be lifted from off My people; his burden removed from their back.²

“This is the purpose which God has determined, not for Judah alone, but for the whole earth, now groaning under the tyrant. For this, it is, that the hand of Jehovah is stretched out over all the nations! Jehovah of Hosts hath decreed this and who shall annul it? His is the outstretched hand; who can turn it back?”¹

The scarlet cloaks and bright red shields of the Assyrians;² the strange dresses of the many foreign and barbarous contingents in the besieging force; their countless chariots; their standards, and their tents, as was remembered centuries after, covered the level space before the north gate, the slopes of the hills around, and the hollow of the neighbouring valleys.³ Deliverance seemed hopeless to some; others trusted to help from Tirhakah, in spite of his defeat. As usual in times of intense excitement, the most opposite passions and moods were displayed. Not a few indulged in the license of despair. Drunkenness and unrestrained debauchery rioted. Isaiah had lost control of the mass of the citizens, though some still listened to him with pale faces. The siege, nevertheless, continued, for Hezekiah would not surrender. Great bodies of men laboured at the defences, but famine advanced apace. In the midst of these terrors and the spreading demoralization, the voice of the prophet was once more heard.

¹ Isaiah xiv. 24–27.

² Nahum ii. 3.

³ Jos., *Bell.*, V. xii. 2. The hills facing Jerusalem on the north were known till the fall of the city as The Camp of the Assyrians.

"What' aileth thee now, O Jerusalem," cried he, shortly before the Assyrians appeared, "that all thine inhabitants have gone up to your flat housetops, looking out for the foe, watching the country people streaming towards the gates for protection, or vainly expecting the sight of help from Tirhakah! O city, full of stir, and noise, and mad joy! Thy men slain, as yet, have not fallen by the sword or in battle, but by hunger and pestilence, through overcrowding. Thy nobles, fleeing as a body from the bow of the Assyrian, whom they expect to see presently, are taken prisoner by their archers, the vanguard of the enemy;² all whom they find outside the gates, seeking to flee afar, are caught and put in chains.³

"For this, look no longer at me; let me weep bitterly. Do not press round, to comfort me amidst the ruin of Jerusalem, the daughter of my people! Jehovah of Hosts has sent us a day



HELMETS, AND STYLE OF WEARING THE HAIR AND BEARD IN THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

of trouble, defeat, and dismay, in the Valley of Vision.⁴ They beleaguer the walls; the citizens cry for help to the hill of Zion where Jehovah dwells!

"The foot-soldiers from Elam have put on their quivers; a long drawn array of chariots and riders follows; the troops from Kir, the next land to Elam, have taken the leather covers of the march from their shields, to be ready for battle; the fairest valleys east, west, and south of Jerusalem are full of chariots, and cavalry posts are set in line over against the gates.

¹ Isa. xxii. 1-14.

² 1 Macc. ix. 11.

³ On the six-sided clay prism of Sennacherib he says of Jerusalem: "All who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off."

⁴ So called, perhaps, as the place where Isaiah and other prophets lived—perhaps where the school of the prophets was.

"Thus God discloses to Judah her weakness. The veil that has hidden her real condition is now drawn aside, and ye will examine the state of the arsenal of the House of the Forest.¹ Ye have already noted how many breaches there are in the walls of Mount Zion, the City of David,²—the highest and strongest of the whole defences. Ye have collected the waters of the Lower Pool, west of Zion: stopping its outflow, to store its supplies; and counted the houses of Jerusalem, breaking down those which might be used by the enemy; to heighten the walls with their material, and fill up the breaches. Ye have made a reservoir between the two walls for the waters of the Old Pool.³ But ye have not looked to Jehovah, the just source of all your adversity, nor regarded Him who, from afar, prepared this tribulation for you!

"Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, calls you on a day like this to weeping and mourning; to cut off your hair, and gird yourselves with sackcloth, in token of penitence. But, instead of this, behold, you give yourselves up to lightness and revelry, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep for feasting; eating flesh and drinking wine; saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' Some act thus in the recklessness of despair; some in mockery of the words of the prophets, trusting yet in their hearts that Egypt will deliver them!

"But Jehovah has revealed Himself in my ears, saying, Such iniquity shall never be forgiven till ye die, saith Jehovah of Hosts!"⁴

But resistance was ere long felt to be hopeless, and Hezekiah capitulated, agreeing to pay the penalty which Sennacherib might impose for his revolt. What it was the annals tell us.

"I cut off from his kingdom his cities which I plundered, and gave them to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. I diminished his kingdom. I raised the yearly gifts and tribute he was to pay to my majesty above the former scale. The fear-

¹ Built by Solomon—the House of the Forest of Lebanon. 1 Kings vii. 2; x. 17. Isa. xxxix. 2.

² The part of Jerusalem known by that name.

³ The steps taken in Sargon's time were repeated. See p. 377.

⁴ Isa. xxii. 14.

ful splendour of my majesty, had overwhelmed him. The workmen, soldiers, and masons whom he had collected for the fortification of Jerusalem, now carried tribute, which he sent after me to my royal city, Nineveh. It consisted of 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver;¹ woven cloth; scarlet, embroidered; precious stones of large size; couches of ivory; moveable thrones of ivory; skins of buffaloes; buffalo teeth; dan wood; ku wood; a great treasure of every kind; and his daughters, and the male and female inmates of his palace, with male slaves and female slaves. He sent also an envoy with the tribute and to do homage."²

A treaty having been made on these humiliating terms, the Assyrians withdrew to the Maritime Plain, where Sennacherib was now engaged in the siege of Lachish. Thither the heavy tribute exacted was first conveyed; Assyrian officials having raised the money by an impost on the citizens,³ and having duly weighed it when delivered. But to pay such an amount strained public and private resources to the utmost. The temple treasury and the palace exchequer were emptied, and the gold still left on the gates and door posts of the sanctuary stripped off.⁴

Jerusalem had submitted, but one place still held out. This was Lachish, a town of the kingdom of Judah, lying to the south, in the hills of the Negeb, not far from the frontiers of Egypt.⁵ Its position and strength

¹ Equal to 300 Jewish talents. 2 Kings xviii. 14. *Brandis*.

² *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 41. *Riehm*, p. 1360. *Menant*, p. 218. See Note, p. 477.

³ Isa. xxxiii. 18.

⁴ 2 Kings xviii. 1 ff. 2 Chron. xxxii. 1 ff. Isa. xxxvi. 1 ff.

⁵ Kiepert places it about 30 miles south-west of Jerusalem, as the crow flies. *Map*. Conder, however, thinks it the present Tel el Hesi, 8 miles west of Kiepert's site. If so, it lay on a hill about 500 feet above the sea, and was 20 miles east of it and 18 miles east of Gaza, and overlooked the Maritime Plain from the last spur of the western slope of the Hebron hills.

had enabled it, so long ago as the time of Joshua, to withstand attack for two days, though other towns on all sides yielded at the first assault.¹ The original population had been Amorite highlanders,² and their love of independence seems to have passed to their successors. The town had been fortified by Rehoboam after the secession of the Ten Tribes,³ but appears to have escaped the fate which overtook most of his strongholds during the invasion of Shishak.

Thither Sennacherib had marched, "with all his power,"⁴ to conduct the siege in person. But he now learned that Seti, the king of Tanis in Egypt, had collected a new army against him, having recovered from his defeat at Eltekeh, and had secured fresh aid from Tirhakah, whose capital, Napata, was in Upper Egypt. This warlike king, moreover, he was informed, glad of the opportunity of coming forward in Egyptian affairs in the character of protector and suzerain, was advancing from the Upper Nile by forced marches, with all the troops of Ethiopia, against the Assyrians. It seemed as if Hezekiah's submission had been a mere cloak to secure time for the arrival of the Cushite monarch. Furious at being apparently thus overreached, Sennacherib at once sent back a flying corps to Jerusalem with three of the high officers of the palace, a Tartan, or general-in-chief, the Rabsaris, or chief of the eunuchs, and the Rabshakeh, or chief of the military staff.⁵

The reappearance of the Assyrians before Jerusalem filled the city with dismay, which was increased when

¹ Josh. x. 3, 5, 26, 31-33, 35.

² Josh. x. 6.

³ 2 Chron. xi. 9.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxxii. 9.

⁵ *Mühlau und Volck*. The Assyrian title is Rabsak. See also Lenormant, *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 361. Schrader, p. 199.

their demands were made known. The rumour of Tirhakah's approach; the fierce attack on Lachish; all the news of the war; had reached Jerusalem. The return of the Assyrian force may have been expected, through reports brought from the camp. The gates were once more shut, and the walls manned. In the crisis Isaiah again harangued the people in a succession of magnificent orations, of which the following seems to have been the earliest.

"Ah!¹ They are come at last! The hum of troops from many nations, murmuring like the waves of seas. Hark! the tumult as if of whole nations, like the tumult of mighty waters!

"The roar of the nations under the banners of Assyria is like the roaring of many waters; but at the rebuke of Jehovah they will presently flee afar; chased by the storm of His indignation, as the chaff flies over the mountains before the wind, from the threshing-floors on the hilltops,² and like the whirling dust before the hurricane.

"Terror shall seize us at the evening tide when they come, but before morning they will have fled! This is the portion of them that spoil us; the lot of them who plunder us!"

The prophet now addresses Egypt—under Tirhakah—the great enemy of Assyria.

"O Land of the buzz of fly-swarms³—emblem of countless armies—by the rivers of Ethiopia, which art sending messengers upon the seas, and in swift, light, papyrus boats⁴ along all your waters, to gather allies, and muster all the force of your empire:

"Go back to your homes, ye swift messengers—go back to Ethiopia—the tall and strong race, terrible in war from their rise

¹ Isa. xvii. 12-14; xviii. 1-7.

² *Herzog*, vol. iii. p. 504.

³ *Delitzsch*. Stinging flies are thought of. Knobel renders the word, "When the shadow falls both ways," but this is doubtful.

⁴ Job ix. 26.

till now,—the nation very strong and all subduing,¹ whose land is seamed with rivers! Jehovah, alone, will destroy the invader!

“All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, when the signal of the approach of the enemy is lifted up on the mountains, take notice; when the alarm trumpet is blown, give ear!

“For thus hath Jehovah said to me: ‘I will take My rest while the Assyrians advance; I will keep My eyes on them through the whole summer, while the unclouded sunshine ripens the herbs, and the night mists temper the heat of harvest. But, before the vintage, when the flowering is over and the blossom is swelling into a ripe grape, I will² lop off the branches with pruning knives, and cut down and clear away the shoots. They shall, together, be left to the vultures and kites of the mountains, and to the wild beasts of the land; the birds shall summer on them, and the wild beasts shall winter on them.

“In that day will gifts of homage be brought to Jehovah of Hosts from the tall and strong nation; the people terrible in war, from their rise; the nation very strong and all-subduing, whose land is seamed with rivers—to the place where the name of Jehovah of Hosts is honoured—Mount Zion.”

Meanwhile the commissioners from Sennacherib took measures to carry out their master's commands. Hezekiah had already submitted on the display of force, and he might do so again. Advancing to the walls, therefore, they demanded a parley, which, of course, was at once granted. Strangely enough, they took their stand by the conduit of the Upper Pool, on the highway running past the Fuller's Field, the very spot where, not far from the walls, Ahaz had had his interview with Isaiah.³ On

¹ The Ethiopians, under Tirhakah, afterwards subdued Egypt, extending their conquests even to the Pillars of Hercules. They were renowned in antiquity as one of the most ancient races, mighty in war and never subdued—*Diod.* iii. 2; Pliny, *H. N.*, vi. 35—and Tirhakah was ranked, as a conqueror, with Sesostris and Nebuchadnezzar. *Strabo*, xv. 686.

² In the Hebrew it is “he,” but Jehovah is referred to.

³ Isa. vii. 3. See p. 307.

Hezekiah's side, Eliakim, now prefect of the palace in the place of Shebna,¹ and that dignitary himself, acting as royal scribe, and one Joah, the royal remembrancer and annalist, went to the nearest part of the wall² to hear the overtures of the Assyrians. Hezekiah, himself, declined to appear, as beneath his kingly dignity.

The Rabshakeh, or chief of the staff, had been chosen as speaker³ for Sennacherib. Since Hezekiah had not thought fit to come personally, his ministers were to tell their master, whom the speaker did not honour by the royal title, that it was clear he had secret relations with some outside power, else he never would have ventured thus to defy the Great King. What did such confidence mean? On whom did he trust in resisting Sennacherib and refusing to surrender Jerusalem? It was only idle talk to say that he trusted to his own abilities and resources. In all probability the Hebrew ambassadors had been asked at Lachish respecting Hezekiah's allies, and had discreetly refrained from mentioning Egypt. Their silence was now treated as a virtual confession, and the Rabshakeh proceeded to ask in direct terms, to whom Hezekiah really looked, that he should thus have rebelled against so mighty a king.⁴ Then, without waiting for an answer he went on—

“I know the whole truth, you have trusted in Egypt;⁵ you have taken it for the staff on which to lean; a poor broken reed, which can give no support, but will shiver under the weight of your hand, and pierce it. Perhaps, however,” he continued, “you will tell me you trust in Jehovah, your God. But how can you hope that He will deliver you, when Hezekiah has insulted Him

¹ Isa. xxii. 20.

² Isa. xxxvi. 11.

³ Isa. xxxvi. 4.

⁴ Judah had been tributary to Assyria since the days of Ahaz.

⁵ Isa. xxix. 15—xxx. 1 ff.

by taking away His high places and His altars¹ in Judah and Jerusalem, and by setting up one altar before which alone the people are to worship?²

"Fight the Great King! Well then, supposing you try issues with him? I am willing to help you. If you can find 2,000 men fit for cavalry service in Jerusalem, I shall give you 2,000 horses for them. But, even then, how could you hope to repel the force of a single subordinate officer of the king, my master! It is idle to speak of your acting on your own strength. Such a petty kingdom must look to foreign aid. This is why you trust in Egypt for chariots and cavalry!

"More than that. You talk of looking to Jehovah for help. Do you think that Sennacherib has come up against this land, to destroy it, without a commission from Jehovah to do so? No, indeed. Our spies have told us the words of your prophets—how Jehovah said to the Great King, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.' So much for your hope of deliverance from your God!"

The keenness of these words lay in their truth. Spoken aloud from beyond the wall, they were heard by the crowd, which stood near enough to the ministers on the parapet to catch all that was said. Feeling the danger of a panic or a revolt in the city, as the words of the Assyrian spread, Hezekiah's representatives, simply enough, begged the Rabshakeh to speak Aramaic or Syriac³ rather than Hebrew,⁴ in which the high official of Sennacherib could converse fluently, as the members of our own government speak other languages besides English.

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 4. 2 Chron. xxxi. 1.

² Isa. xxxvi. 7.

³ The Aramaic was the great commercial language of Syria, Palestine, and Western Asia, and ultimately supplanted Hebrew among the Jews themselves. Private contract tables in Assyrian and Aramaic have been found at Nineveh.

⁴ The phrase "the Jews' language," Isa. xxxvi. 11, has apparently been substituted for the Hebrew language by some later reviser of the sacred text. It is an expression of more recent date.

But the Assyrian was not the man to give such an advantage to his opponents.

"Speak in Aramaic!" said he; "do you think I am sent to speak to you, then, or to your master? No, I am sent to these men, the defenders of the wall, to tell them the misery they will endure if they continue to resist the Great King; and of course I shall use their language."

Then lifting his voice, and speaking at his loudest in Hebrew, he addressed the citizens and soldiers within farthest hearing:

"Listen, all of you, to the words of the Great King, the king of Assyria! He bids me tell you not to let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. And don't let him induce you to trust in Jehovah for deliverance. Pay no attention to what he says, but give heed to the offers of my master, the Great King. 'Make peace with me,' says he, 'and come out to me, and give up your city into my hands, and then you shall live peaceably on your own land, every man eating the fruit of his own vine and fig-tree, and drinking the water of his own cistern, till I come, after the war with Egypt is over, and take you away to another land like your own, a land of corn and wine, of bread and vineyards,¹ of generous olive trees and of honey.' Listen to these words of the Great King, that ye may live and not die, and hearken not to Hezekiah.²

"Beware lest Hezekiah move you to further resistance by saying 'Jehovah will deliver us.' Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hands of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, in the north, or of Sepharvaim, in Mesopotamia? And did the gods of Samaria deliver that city out of my hands? And if all these gods were helpless against the gods of my master, how much less will Jehovah, the weak God of a weak people, be able to resist him!"

This fierce and blasphemous boasting was received in profound silence, Hezekiah having wisely forbidden a word of reply, lest it might provoke the Assyrians to

¹ Isa. xxxvi. 17.

² 2 Kings xviii. 32.

fiercer hostility; perhaps to an instant attempt to storm the city. The parley having ended, the Assyrians rode back to their camp.

The three ministers of Hezekiah, greatly distressed by the tone and demands of the enemy, now made their way to the palace, their clothes rent, and they and the people filling the air with lamentation.¹ The news appalled the king. Rending his robes in bitterness of soul, he forthwith put on sackcloth, in token of grief, and like the good man he was, went straight to the temple, to lay his case before God. The whole court, also, assumed coarse black mantles of sackcloth,² and Eliakim and Shebna, with the senior priests, in these robes of mourning, were sent to tell Isaiah what had happened.

"This is a day of trouble,"³ said they to him, in the name of Hezekiah, "a day of trouble and of rebuke from God, and of blasphemy from the heathen. The city is in the most critical and desperate state, and has no power to help itself. It may be that Jehovah, thy God, will note the blasphemous words of the Rabshakeh, whom the Great King, his master, has sent to insult the Living God, and will deal punishment on him for them, and may the king ask that you lift up your prayer for those of us that are left?"

The reply of Isaiah was sublime.

"Tell your master," he replied "that Jehovah commands him not to fear the blasphemous words he has heard from these slaves⁴ of the king of Assyria. 'Behold' says Jehovah, 'I will put such a spirit in him that on his hearing the rumour of the approach of Tirhakah, he shall retreat to his own country, and there I will cause him to fall by the sword.'"⁵

¹ Isa. xxxvi. 22. ² *i.e.* Cloth for sacking. ³ Isa. xxxvii. 3-7.

⁴ Lit. "young men," a contemptuous phrase.

⁵ This was spoken in 701. Sennacherib was murdered in Assyria, by his sons, in 682, nineteen years later.

Encouraged by such an assurance, Hezekiah forthwith sent back his answer to the Assyrians, refusing under any circumstances to deliver up the city, and the Rabshakeh had to return with this irritating news to Libnah, on which Sennacherib had now fallen back, in alarm at the approach of Tirhakah.¹

During these days or weeks of intense excitement and anxiety, Isaiah was fearless and defiant as ever. Hezekiah and his people heard his voice again and again, rousing them to trust in Jehovah even in this darkest hour. An oration, apparently of this date, has come down to us.

“Woe,”² cried the great patriot prophet, “Woe to thee thou Spoiler of Nations, though thyself unspoiled; thou that showest violence when no violence has been shown to thee! Wherefore invadest thou Judah, which has not wronged thee? When thou hast ended thy permitted work as a spoiler, thou thyself shalt be spoiled! When thou hast finished the violence thou art allowed to show, violence will be meted out to thyself!

“O Jehovah! be gracious unto us; in Thee do we trust. Be Thou the Arm of Thy people each morning, to protect and help through the day. Be Thou our salvation in this time of trouble!

“At the voice of the thunder that heralds Thy approach the many peoples of the Assyrian army flee! When Thou liftest up Thyself against them, their nations are scattered! The spoil of your host, O peoples, will be carried off by us, as locusts strip the spoil of the field; as they spread swiftly over the ground in countless numbers, so shall the inhabitants of Jerusalem rush out to the booty.

“Jehovah is exalted as the Victor, for He sits throned in the heavens, Lord of all; the Great God before whom all must yield! He is the Holy God, for He has filled Zion with justice by His judgments; righteousness, by His faithfulness to His promises. Wisdom and knowledge, to feel and act on this, will be the security of thy times, O Judah, against future attacks of thine

¹ Isa. xxxvii. 8.

² Isa. xxxiii. 1-24.

enemies; they will be to thee ■ fountain¹ of safety. The fear of Jehovah is the great treasure of man!

Some time before the return of the Assyrians, Hezekiah had sought to deprecate the wrath of Sennacherib, of which terrible rumours had reached him from Lachish. For this end he had sent ambassadors, in the hope that they might possibly convince the Great King that no treachery was intended, and save the country from a second invasion, or possibly even obtain favourable terms for Lachish itself.



Jews IMPLORING MERCY FROM SENNACHERIB, AT LACHISH. *From the Sculptures.*

The embassy had found him at that city, which was soon after taken by storm and delivered to the tender mercies of the soldiery.² A slab from his palace at Nineveh, now in the British Museum, shows him in state "receiving the plunder of the town of Lachish." He sits on a throne before his tent; two arrows in one

¹ Lit. "treasure" or "wealth."

² "I give permission for its slaughter." Words of Sennacherib on the great tablet of the siege of Lachish. Layard's *Nineveh and Babylonia*, pp. 149-152.

hand and his bow in the other, while prisoners are being brought before him; an officer, attended by a guard, stating the facts respecting them. Two eunuchs stand with feather flaps to wave over him, for coolness and to keep away the flies. Two horses, ready for his use, are behind; soldiers with tall lances attending them. The front rank of prisoners before him kneel, to implore mercy, and behind them is a long file of their unfortunate companions. Some whose fate has already been decided have been led a short way off and killed; others may be spared, as slaves. A chariot with two horses stands near—perhaps that of Sennacherib; and numerous fruit trees over the whole slab show the fruitfulness of the country. A strong force of horse and foot, on the right of the picture, guards the king.

Hezekiah's mission found no success. It was of the greatest importance to Sennacherib that he should obtain possession of Jerusalem, to support and protect his rear, and he therefore dismissed the ambassadors without deigning to listen to their entreaties. To this Isaiah refers in the next words of his oration—

“The lion-like ones sent to Lachish, to Sennacherib, as suppliants for peace, return crushed by the hard conditions, and weep without the gates as they approach; the messengers of peace weep bitterly. The roads lie desolate; travel on them has ceased. Sennacherib has broken the treaty; he uses our cities shamefully; he regards no man. The whole land mourns and languishes. Lebanon stands ashamed and withers away; the rich sea-coast plains are like a desert; Bashan and Carmel are bare!

“Now will I arise, saith Jehovah! Now will I stand forth; now will I lift myself up! Your designs against Judah are idle, O Assyria. Ye conceive withered grass; ye bring forth stubble—both, the light fuel of the oven! Your own flaming breath—the breath of your raging fury against the nations, shall consume you! The peoples under your banners will be burnt up and

reduced to dust, like lime—They shall be like the cuttings of thorn bushes that are burnt in the fire ¹

“Hear, ye nations that are far off, what I have thus done; ye that are near and have seen it, acknowledge My might! The transgressors in Zion itself tremble lest judgment be let loose on them also, as well as the Assyrians: terror has seized the ungodly. ‘Ob, who,’ cry they, in their guilty fears, ‘can escape’ from this devouring fire of God’s wrath? Who can escape from the undying flames of His judgments?’ He, let me answer, that walks in righteousness and is upright in his words; who warns off attempts at bribery and keeps his hands clean from it; who stops his ears and will not listen to schemes of murder or violence; who closes his eyes from sharing in evil. Such a man shall dwell high above danger; he will be safe from the judgments around, as in an unassailable fortress of the rocks; his bread will be given him; his water shall not fail.

“Yet these judgments will pass away! Thine eyes, O Jerusalem, shall once more see the king in his beauty, arrayed in his splendour, and no longer humbled and clad in sackcloth as now;² and behold the land, far and near, freed from the enemy, and restored to Judah! Thy heart shall think of the past terror. Where is now the Assyrian who assessed the tribute; where is he who weighed it when handed over? Where is the leader of the besieging force, who counted the towers of Jerusalem, to storm them? They have fled! Thou shalt no longer see the barbarous people, the people of dark unintelligible speech, whose stammering words one could not understand.⁴

“Thou shalt surely, O Jehovah, look on Zion, the city where we assemble to our religious feasts; Thine eyes shall look down on Jerusalem as our peaceful home—a tent that will not wander; whose pins shall never be pulled up; whose cords shall never be rent away.⁵ For there Jehovah is our defender, instead of

¹ The burning of corpses was hateful to the Hebrews.

² *Ewald*, “who can protect us from!”

³ Isa. xxxvii. 1. 2 Kings vi. 30.

⁴ Though allied to Hebrew, the Assyrian language was unintelligible to the people of Palestine.

⁵ No longer in dread of conquest or deportation; not like a tent that is taken down and carried off, but fixed and permanent.

the broad rivers and moats that protect other cities. Jehovah Himself will be to us a wide girdle of waters which no war-galley with its banks of oars will enter, and which no mighty war-ship shall attempt to pass over. For Jehovah is our judge; Jehovah our commander; Jehovah our King! He will save us!

"Thy ropes hang slack, O Zion, now the enemy is on thee! they will not hold up the mast, nor keep upright a flag staff on which thy pennon may spread out. But when Assyria flees, then shall the spoil of a mighty booty be divided; even the lame will be able to seize a share! The miseries of the past will be forgotten. The inhabitants shall say no more, 'I am sick;' the people that dwell there shall be forgiven all the iniquity of the past."¹

His first attempt to get possession of Jerusalem having failed, Sennacherib determined on another effort to secure it without being compelled to undertake a siege. Disguising his real feelings, he stooped to dictate a letter to Hezekiah, and with this he sent back the Rabshakeh, to make a second attempt to terrify the king into surrender. To take his city by a tedious formal investment would require too much time. Recounting, like his spokesman at the first parley, a long list of cities and countries² whose gods had been unable to protect them against his arms, and boasting of his deeds in all lands, how he had utterly destroyed them, the letter of Sennacherib warned Hezekiah not to let Jehovah deceive him by a false promise of deliverance.

This renewed attempt of the enemy to wrest Jerusalem from his hands having been duly read by the king, he once more betook himself, with a touching piety, to the temple, to spread it before Jehovah, as if to stir up His wrath at its blasphemies by laying them, as it were, before His eyes, and to implore His protection.³

¹ Isaiah xxxiii. 7-24.

² Gozan, Harran, Rezeph, and Telessar were in Mesopotamia. Some other places are not known.

³ Antiquity was, in its way, very religious. A striking parallel

His prayer was alike touching and sublime.

"O Jehovah of Hosts," it runs; "the God of Israel, who art enthroned upon the cherubim! Thou alone art the true God of all the kingdoms of the earth, for Thou hast made both heaven and earth. Incline Thine ear to me, O Lord, and hear my prayer; open Thine eyes and look, and read the blasphemies of this letter against Thee, the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have burnt their gods and have destroyed them; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands—wood and stone. Now, therefore, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone art the one living God, Jehovah."¹

He had appealed to a God who hears prayer² and never forsakes the righteous when they call on Him in the day of trouble.³ Forthwith Isaiah received a fresh prophetic intimation, which he was commissioned to communicate at once to Hezekiah. Hastening therefore to the palace, the undaunted patriot seer cheered and

for example, to Hezekiah's act, is told of Assurbanipal. On receiving a message that a powerful enemy was determined to fight him, he went into the temple of Ishtar, and, approaching the goddess, wept before her, and reminded her of his good deeds in restoring her temples; professed that he loved her courts; contrasted the conduct of his enemy—the violent man, hater of the gods—with his own; related all her titles and glories, told how his foe gathered an army against him, and wound up by imploring her to hurl him down like a stone in the day of battle, and sweep him away like a storm and an evil wind. He relates how the goddess heard his prayer, telling him not to fear, and how, on the same night, a seer, while he slept, had a vision in which the goddess appeared to him surrounded with glory, and holding a bow in her hand, ready equipped for war. She sent the king an encouraging message, telling him to eat food and drink wine, and engage in festivities, for she would give him the victory. Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 156-7.

¹ Isa. xxxvii. 16-20.

² Ps. lxxv. 2.

³ Ps. l. 15.

confirmed the courage of the king in words which still move the heart as we read them.

"Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel,"¹ he began; "'I have heard thy prayer concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria.' This is the word Jehovah has spoken against him.

"The virgin daughter of Sion despises and mocks at thee; the daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head at thee! Whom hast thou affected to despise? Whom hast thou dared to blaspheme? Against whom hast thou raised thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel!

"By the mouth of thy servants thou hast affected to despise Jehovah, saying: 'With the multitude of my chariots have I ascended the heights of the mountains, to the very recesses of Lebanon, and have hewn down its tallest cedars and its choicest cypresses, and I will press on to its farthest height;² its garden-like woodland.³ Where water was scarce I dug wells for my army and have drunk in abundance; the arms and canals of the Nile will be dried up under the tread of my countless host, and will not hinder my entrance to Egypt.

"All this, thy boasting, is vain folly, for thou hast done nothing of thine own might, but only as the appointed instrument of Jehovah. Hast thou not heard by thy spies and by common report, through My prophets, that it was I, long ago, from the days of old, who determined and planned all that has happened, and that in laying waste the strong cities of Judah as thou hast done, and turning them into heaps of ruins, thou hast only been carrying out My will? It was only because I had given them up to thee that their citizens were weak, dismayed, and helpless; that they were before the flames of thy rage like the grass of the field, or the young herbs, or the grass on the roof tops, or the springing corn, before the scorching sun or the glowing hot wind.

¹ Isaiah xxxvii. 21-35.

² Other conquerors have boasted much in the same way. Alaric marching on Rome says: "We have seen the mountains sink; the rivers dry up before us."

³ This may, as already noticed, mean Mount Zion, and the royal pleasure grounds of Jerusalem. In 2 Kings xix. 23, the phrase is "lodging-place," or "caravanserai" instead of "height."

“But to show thee how worthless are thy boasts and thy blasphemies; I have all along known thy abode in Assyria, before thy marching out from it, thy starting against Judah, thy invasion of the land, and thy rage against Me! And now, because thy fury oversteps the limits I have allowed thee; because thy rage against Me, and thy insolent boasting, have come up into My ears, I will put My ring in thy nose, and My bridle into thy jaws, as men do with a furious wild beast, and will turn thee back to Assyria by the way thou camest, with thy object unaccomplished!

“And this shall be the sign to thee, O Judah, that I shall do this! This year ye shall eat what is self-grown from the last crop; the next ye shall have only what springs from the old roots, but the third year ye shall sow, and reap, and plant fresh vineyards and eat of their fruit. And the remnant of the House of Judah, that has escaped from the Assyrian, shall again strike root downward and bear fruit upward. For a remnant shall go forth from Jerusalem, and those who escape shall go forth from mount Zion, to re-people the land.

“Therefore, thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria. He shall not come into this city, Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow into it; nor bring the shield of his troops against it; nor cast up an earthen wall round it, as besiegers do. Instead of this he shall return from Egypt to Assyria by the way that he came, along the coast, leaving Jerusalem on his right, unattacked, and he shall not come into this city, saith Jehovah. For I will protect it as a bird protects its nest, and save it, for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David.”

The striking fulfilment of this prediction, which, indeed, was only the repetition of others as precise, is attested alike by sacred and profane antiquity. The Bible tells us that “the Angel of the Lord went forth that night and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand, and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.”¹

¹ 2 Kings xix. 35.

"All the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and the captains of the camp perished," says another text.¹ "So Sennacherib returned with shame of face to his own land." In marked corroboration of this, Herodotus relates that the priests of Egypt told him how "Sennacherib, king of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched a large army into Egypt. On this the Egyptian army refused to help their king, Sethon, a priest of Vulcan. He, therefore, being reduced to a strait, entered the temple and lamented before the god the calamities impending. While thus engaged he fell asleep, and the god appeared to him in a vision, telling him that he would stand by him, and encouraging him by the assurance that he should not suffer, since he, the god, would send him help. Trusting this vision, the priest-king took with him such men as would follow him, and shut himself up in Pelusium, at the entrance of Egypt. But when they arrived there myriads of field mice, pouring in on their enemies, devoured their quivers and bows and the handles of their shields, so that when they fled, next day, defenceless, many of them were killed. And to this day, he adds, a stone statue of this king stands in the temple of Vulcan, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription: 'Whoever looks on me, let him revere the gods.'"²

¹ 2 Chron. xxxii. 21. Isa. xxxvii. 36.

² *Herod.*, ii. 141. A similar statue of Apollo, with a mouse at his foot, stood at Chryse, in the Troad. It was said to commemorate the overthrow of the Teucrians by an army of field-mice, which ate the leather straps of their armour in the night, and forced them to retreat. Blakesley's *Herodotus*, i. 273.

Supposing this borrowed from the Egyptian tradition, it may have indirectly risen from the story of the defeat of the Assyrians. The mouse was the symbol of wasting and destruction, and was, perhaps, intended only to embody the idea of secret and irresistible ruin.

At what time in the prosecution of Sennacherib's designs against Jerusalem this catastrophe overtook him, is uncertain. Was "that night" alluded to in the account in the Book of Kings, the one following the day on which the words of doom had been spoken? Isaiah's declaration that the Assyrians would neither "come into the city, nor shoot an arrow, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it,"¹ seems at least to imply that, whether the prophet uttered his denunciation on the day of the second appearance of the enemy before Jerusalem, or at an earlier date, the crisis burst on them before they had completed their dispositions for attack, which, perhaps, was delayed by the desire to secure the surrender of the city by negotiation rather than force. The Greek version of the passage in Kings simply states that the visitation of God broke on the host by night, and Isaiah omits any special reference to the time.² Josephus,³ in agreement with the tradition of his day,⁴ assumes that the first day of the siege was also the last, and saw both the encampment and flight of the foe.

The vast multitude who perished—185,000 men⁵—points to a far greater calamity than could have befallen the army-corps detached for service against Jerusalem. It seems probable that affairs had not prospered with Sennacherib from the first, in spite of his pompous inscriptions. Indeed, it appears as if this could be read between the lines; for though he boasts of having gained a victory at Eltekeh,⁶ no list of prisoners or details of the booty are given, and he has to content himself with stating that he took the town of Eltekeh, and Timnah, which very possibly was only an unwallled village. He

¹ Isaiah xxxvii. 33.

² *Ant.*, X. i. 5.

³ 2 Kings xix. 35.

² Isaiah xxxvii. 35.

⁴ *Gemara Sanhed.*, iii. 26.

⁵ See p. 437.

speaks of having shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage, but there is nothing said of the capture of Jerusalem, nor of the conquest of Egypt, or even of his having entered it, though this was the great object of the campaign. He vaunts, indeed, of having forced Hezekiah to hand over to him, along with the tribute he had imposed, "his daughters, and the male and female inmates of the palace," but this is in all probability an empty flourish, for the surrender of members of the royal family and of the members of the court, including the ladies of the harem, would have been a humiliation only to be exacted after the unconditional capture of the city, and there is no hint of that in the Bible narrative.

It seems probable that after the doubtful triumph at Eltekeh, Sennacherib contented himself with besieging and taking Lachish with part of his army; a large force being sent on, possibly, towards Egypt, while a corps was detached against Jerusalem. But the plague, which had perhaps already shown itself in the host, appears to have broken out violently in its different sections before Jerusalem, beyond Eltekeh, and at Libnah, to which the headquarters had been removed on the fall of Lachish. The Jewish tradition handed down from generation to generation understood the language of Scripture as indicating an outbreak of pestilence,¹ let loose, as in the case of the similar visitation of Jerusalem under David, by the angel of God specially commissioned to inflict the Divine wrath.² It was alarming enough that reports should be brought in of a new force under the redoubtable Tirhakah being on the march against him. Even had his armies been in good condition, a fresh struggle with so doughty an adversary was enough to raise anxiety. But the prospect under the circumstances

¹ Jos., *Ant.*, X. i. 5.

² 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16, 17.

was disastrous. News from the advanced divisions and from the force at Jerusalem revealed the same widespread ruin of his host as he saw around him at Libnah. Instead of the thousands of mail-clad warriors, lately so eager for the battle, only a terrified remnant could marshal round him. His mighty men of valour—the rank and file of his proudest battalions—his officers and generals, had been struck down. “Captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, with girdles on their loins, exceeding in dyed attire and scarlet robes, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men :”¹ squadrons, and companies, numerous at the leaves of the woods,² were lying dead around him. Asshur, his god, had forsaken him, and the evil spirits of the abyss, the Maskim, the Gigim, the Utuq, and the Spirits of the Air—those awful genii with bodies of flame—had been let loose on him and his host, to destroy them.³ Deserted by heaven, and left to the fury of the dreaded demons of pestilence and death, the panic-stricken king could think of nothing but instant, though ignominious, flight towards Nineveh, where he might hope to appease his gods. Orderly retreat was impossible. The skeleton battalions were too demoralized. A deadly fear had seized the survivors. The spectacle in each camp was too appalling to leave room for hesitation. The genius of Byron, embodying with wonderful accuracy the details given by the Hebrew sacred writers, helps us to realize it, in a measure.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of his spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

¹ Ezek. xxiii. 12–15.

² Isa. x. 34.

³ Lenormant, *La Magie*, p. 27.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
The host, with their banners, at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host, on the morrow, lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved and for ever grew still.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider, distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Asshur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted, like snow, in the glance of the Lord!

The transition of the population of Judah and Jerusalem from intense alarm to the wildest rejoicings, must have been like a sudden passing from the darkness and terrors of a tempest, to light and calm. The flight of the Assyrians was the signal for a wild pursuit by well-nigh all the surviving manhood of the land. The garrisons of the towns and fortresses which Sennacherib had taken had doubtless abandoned them, and the whole host, in tumultuous and disorganized crowds, could think only of escape to their own country. Isaiah describes the booty taken as immense. The inhabitants of Jerusalem rushed out, like locusts crowding to a green field, to plunder the camp.¹ Even the crippled and lame, he tells us, hurried to the spoil.² The hills over which the Assy-

¹ Isaiah xxxiii. 4.

² Isaiah xxxiii. 23.

rians fled received the name of the "mountains of prey."¹ As the French army in its retreat from Moscow was pursued even by the peasants of both sexes and remorselessly killed in thousands, in their helplessness, so, doubtless was it in this great uprising of the remnant of Judah. Weak and spiritless, at once from terror and disease, hill and valley saw the warriors of Sennacherib sink down to die, a prey "to the vultures and kites of the mountains and the wild beasts of the land: the birds summered on them and the wild beasts wintered on them."² Perhaps the only parallel of which details are known, must be sought in the flight from Russia in 1812, in which thirty thousand horses perished in a few days, and only twenty thousand men, without arms, remained alive, out of five hundred thousand.³

¹ Ps. lxxvi. 4.

² Isaiah xviii. 6.

³ Labaume's *Campaign in Russia*, pp. 339, 391.

The following note supplies a curiously analogous calamity to a besieging army in modern times:—

"To obliterate the disgrace of Pavia, Francis I., in league with England, Switzerland, Rome, Geneva, and Venice, against the powerful Emperor of Germany, sent a fine army into Italy. The emperor's troops gave way wherever the French plumes appeared, and victory seemed faithful only to the banners of France, and to the military experience of a tried leader. Everything promised a glorious issue; Naples alone, weakly defended by German lansquenets* and Spaniards, remained still to be vanquished. The siege was opened on the 1st May, 1528, and the general confidently pledged his honour for the conquest of this strong city, which had once been so destructive to the French. It was easy with an army of 30,000 veteran warriors to overpower the imperialists; and a small body of English seemed to have come merely to partake in the festivals after the expected victory. The city, too, suffered from a scarcity, for it was blockaded by Doria with his Genoese galleys; and water, fit to drink, failed after Lantrec had turned off the aqueducts of Poggioreale; so that the

* Lansquenet = Landsknecht, a common soldier.

A deliverance so wonderful might well fill the hearts of all with the deepest emotions. The mountain wave

plague, which had never entirely ceased among the Germans since the sacking of Rome, began to spread. Ere long however, pestilences began to rage among the troops, and human courage could no longer withstand the 'far shooting arrows of the god of day.' Those soldiers who were not already confined to bed in their tents were seen with pallid visages, swelled legs, and bloated bellies, scarcely able to crawl; so that, weary of nightly watching, they were often plundered by the marauding Neapolitans. The great mortality did not commence until about the 15th of July, but so dreadful was its ravages, that about three weeks were sufficient to complete the almost entire destruction of the army. Around and within the tents vacated by the death of their inmates, noxious weeds sprung up. Thousands perished without help, either in a state of stupor, or in the raving delirium of fever. In the entrenchments, in the tents, and wherever death had overtaken his victims, there these unburied corpses lay, and the dead that were interred, swollen with putridity, burst their shallow graves, and spread a poisonous stench far and wide over the camp. There was no longer any thought of order or military discipline, and many of the commanders and captains were either sick themselves, or had fled to the neighbouring towns, in order to avoid the contagion. The consequence was that within the space of seven weeks, out of the whole host, which up to that period had been eager for combat, a mere handful remained, consisting of a few thousands of cadaverous figures, who were almost incapable of bearing arms, or of following the commands of their sick leaders. On the 29th of August the siege was raised. Fifteen days after the heroic Lautrec, bowed down by chagrin and disease, had resigned his breath; the wreck of the army retreated amid thunder and rain, and were soon captured by the Imperialists, so that but few of them ever saw their native land again. This siege brought still greater misery upon France than even the fatal battle of Pavia, for about 5,000 of the French nobility, some from the most distinguished families, had perished under the walls of Naples. Its remoter consequences, too, were humiliating to the king and the people; since, owing to its failure, all those hitherto feasible schemes were blighted, which had for their

that hung tottering over the State the one moment had in the next sunk back and disappeared. What no available human power could have done had been accomplished, without the intervention of human agency, by a word from the lips of Jehovah. The mightiest of empires had been proved impotent as the idle pageant of a dream, against the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The war had become a great struggle between Assyrian idolatry and the true religion, by Isaiah's constant reference to Jehovah as the Leader and Champion of Judah. The triumph was God's. To Him belonged the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the majesty, and the victory.¹ The salvation He had wrought for His people was a repetition of that which He had accomplished under Moses, ages before, against Pharaoh and his host. For a moment the grand Puritanism of the better ages of Israel reappeared. The temple services, revived in the beginning of the reign with all the splendour of the time of David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, were never more earnest, or thronged by more eager crowds. The Psalms of David² and of Asaph, and the music of the Levitical choirs organized by Gad and Nathan, David's favourite seers, and by the poet king himself, filled the courts of the Sacred House with melodious anthems, and the smoke of countless sacrifices rose from the well ordered ministrations of the successive courses of priests. Nor was the inspiration of new psalmists wanting to round the fulness of that granted to the triumphant prophets. Some of their sacred lyrics,

object the establishment of French dominion beyond the Alps. The glory of the French arms was departed, and her proud banners cowered beneath an unhallowed spectre."—*Hecker's Epics of the Middle Ages*, pp. 721-2.

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

² 2 Chron. xxix. 25, 31.

indeed, are still preserved in the Canon. Among these the forty-sixth psalm "by the sons of Korah," "a song, for sopranos," fitly embodies the national exultation at the fall of the arch-enemy of the land.

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear though the earth be shaken;
Though the mountains tremble on their foundations, beneath
the depths of the seas.
Let the waters roar and foam!
Let the mountains shake before their waves,
(Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence!)

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God;
The holy place of the dwellings of the Most High!
God is in her midst; she shall not be moved.
God shall help her, with the morning dawn.
The nations raged; their kingdoms were moved against us,
But God uttered His voice, and the earth melted with fear!
Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence!

"Come, behold the deeds of Jehovah;
What wondrous things¹ He has done in the earth!
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow; He snaps the spear asunder;
He burns the war chariot in the fire!

"'Be still,' says He, 'and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the heathen!
I will be exalted in the earth.
Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence.'"²

The forty-seventh Psalm is also attributed to this time and is worthy of it.

¹ Ewald and Hitzig. Olshausen renders it, "terrors."

² Ps. xlv.

"Clap your hands, all ye nations;
 Shout unto God with the voice of triumph!
 For Jehovah, the Most High, is terrible:
 He, alone, is the Great King, over all the earth.
 He subdues the nations under us:
 The peoples under our feet.
 He chooses our inheritance for us,
 The land which was the glory of Jacob, whom He loved!

"God went up into His sanctuary, before our armies, with a
 shout!
 Jehovah went up before them with the sound of trumpets!
 Sing praises to God, sing praises!
 Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
 For God is King of all the earth.
 Sing ye praises, ye skilled choirs!¹
 God reigns over the heathen!
 He sits triumphant on His holy throne.

"The nobles of the peoples assemble
 As the servants of the God of Abraham;
 For all the shields—the protectors and kings—of the earth are
 Jehovah's:
 He is greatly exalted."²

The seventy-sixth Psalm has the inscription in the Septuagint, "On the Assyrian," and was thus attributed, centuries before Christ, to the great deliverance under Hezekiah. Its stirring words may well have expressed the triumph of so great a time.

¹ Hitzig refers the words translated, "with understanding," "to the trained singing of the choirs;" supposing that the soldiery have sung what precedes. *Die Psalmen*, vol. i. p. 262.

² An anticipation of a general acknowledgment of Jehovah by the kings and princes of the nations now subdued by Him. They are represented as consecrated to Him, and as having become the servants of Jehovah. May that time, in the highest sense, soon arrive!

"In Judah is God known;
 His name is great in Israel;
 In Salem is the covert¹ of the Lion of Judah;
 His lair² is in Zion.
 There brake he the flashing arrows of the bow;
 The shield, and the sword, and the battle.³
 Glorious art Thou, and majestic, coming down from the hills of
 Jerusalem, the mountains of prey;⁴
 The stout-hearted are spoiled: they sleep their sleep:
 None of the mighty warriors can find their hands.
 At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
 Both chariot and horse lie in a dead sleep.

"Thou, Thou art to be feared!
 And who may stand before Thee when Thou art angry!
 From heaven Thou soundedst forth Thy judgment:
 The earth feared and was still,
 When God stood up for judgment;
 To save the oppressed ones of the earth!

"For the wrath of man shall praise Thee;
 With what is left of that wrath, after Thy judgments,
 Thou girdest Thyself for Thine own purposes.⁵
 Praise Jehovah your God, and pay vows to Him!

"All ye that are round about Him,
 Bring gifts of homage to Him that ought to be feared!
 He mows down the pride of princes;
 He is terrible to the kings of the earth."

The profound impression of a deliverance so wonderful
 never passed away. Judas Maccabæus, on the eve of his
 great battle with Nicanor, recalled it to his soldiers. The
 story of the Great King's flight from Jerusalem before

¹ Same word = "den," Ps. x. 9; "covert," Jer. xxv. 38.

² Same word = Job. xxxviii. 40, "den." Ps. civ. 22. Cant. iv.
8. Amos iii. 4. Nah. ii. 12 (13).

³ Moll says, "weapon of war."

⁴ *Moll.* The hills henceforth famous for the booty gathered
on their slopes and in their valleys.

⁵ This seems the meaning of these obscure words.

the outstretched arm of God is still read in the churches of Moscow on the anniversary of the retreat of the French from Russia. The opening watchword of the Jewish hymn, "God is our refuge and strength," was once the inscription over the grandest of Christian churches—that of St. Sophia at Constantinople; and it is the basis of Luther's magnificent hymn, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," sung by the German armies in the great French war of 1870, before each battle, as it had been in every earlier crisis of the nation for well nigh three hundred years.

The remaining years of Hezekiah's reign passed in peace and security. It was perhaps in them that he reconquered the portion of Judah wrested from Ahaz by the Philistines.¹ The roads, which had been deserted during the Assyrian troubles, were again thronged; the towns that had been destroyed were rebuilt. It has been fancied, but on apparently insufficient grounds, that Sennacherib returned to Palestine eleven years later, in B.C. 690. The Great King had little inclination to revisit scenes associated with such a tremendous disaster,² and hence Judah was left in peace. Districts that had fallen out of culture were again needed by prosperous communities, for the population gradually recovered the loss of their brethren deported to Nineveh. Colonies of Simeonites settled in the far south of the Negeb;³ trade revived through the land, and the kingdom was respected by surrounding nations. Like a summer sun, Hezekiah, seen through the calm golden air of his later years, seemed larger at his setting than when at his height.

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 8.

² Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 117, 123. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 174-196.

³ 1 Chron. iv. 34-43.

Sennacherib survived the gigantic disaster of his invasion of Palestine, for nineteen years, which were marked by a succession of campaigns on a scale of grandeur that shows how readily the empire, by its pitiless conscriptions, recovered from the military losses it had sustained.

In the year B.C. 700 he marched southward, to Babylonia, for the second time. Merodach Baladan, after his defeat B.C. 704, had hidden for a time in the marshy districts of the lower Euphrates, but having been hunted out of them by the Assyrian generals sent in pursuit, embarked, with his gods and his treasures, from the coast of the Persian Gulf—"the Great Sea of the Rising Sun"—and having crossed it in safety, landed at Nagitu, a city of Elam. Here he was beyond the reach of Sennacherib, and, with his numerous followers, was cheered by a friendly welcome. It had been the emigration of a colony rather than the flight of an individual.

But Chaldæa was not pacified even when its king was lost. Suzub, a patriot chief, became so formidable in his resistance that Sennacherib had to set out against him in person, and dispersed his army, forcing him to flee to the hiding places of the South. Now, at last, the whole region that had caused so much trouble could be laid waste. Southern Babylonia was given up to the soldiery; its towns and villages plundered, and thirty thousand fighting men, captured in battle, deported to distant lands, or incorporated in the Assyrian army.

The years B.C. 699-698, or those immediately after, were spent in a fifth campaign against the wild mountain tribes north of Assyria. A vast mountain chain runs east and west, from the region of Lake Van into Asia Minor, forming there the chain now called the Taurus, but bearing throughout, among the Assyrians, the name

of Nipur. The parts of this great range which extend through Western Armenia, Cappadocia, and Cilicia, were invaded, to subdue the hardy races inhabiting their hill sides and valleys. The physical difficulties of such a task were immense, Sennacherib and his soldiers having often to climb the mountains after their foes. But in the end these were overcome, and the whole region devastated ; its towns burned ; its flocks and herds driven off ; and vast numbers of the population, with their goods, carried into slavery in Assyria.

The flight of Merodach Baladan and his companions to Elam had, meanwhile, been a source of irritation to the Great King. They were his subjects, and he would force them to return ; they were rebels, and he would show them his power, and crush them so that they should henceforth be harmless. Three or four years, from about B.C. 697, were therefore occupied with a series of operations against them. If Merodach Baladan had escaped by sea, he would follow him over the same waters, and thus escape the difficult task of fighting his way through the Elamite mountains. Establishing two dockyards—the one on the Euphrates, the other at Nineveh,—he caused a fleet, like Phenician galleys,¹ to be built by shipwrights brought from Tyre and other Mediterranean ports, for the purpose. His own people being unacquainted with ocean navigation, sailors were engaged from Ionia, Tyre, Sidon, and other sea-faring races of the Levant. The vessels when finished were floated empty, down the Euphrates and Tigris, till the depth of water permitted their being laden. Stores and troops were then taken on board, and the armada dropped down towards the Persian Gulf. Before entering it, however, Sennacherib was careful to propitiate Hea, the god of the

¹ He calls them "Syrian ships."

ocean, by sacrifices, and by offering to him images of ships and fishes, made of gold, which he bore out to the sea-waters with imposing ceremonies, and dropped into the depths in which the god was supposed to dwell. Believing he had thus secured the favour of the Assyrian Neptune, he now set sail, keeping close to the coast, and having forced a landing at the Chaldæan settlements, plundered them, carried off many of their inhabitants, and returned to the Euphrates with the captives and the spoil.

The unfortunate but unconquerable Babylonians, hoping that an undertaking apparently so rash and dangerous as this naval expedition might end in disaster, had once more risen, during Sennacherib's absence. Merodach Baladan was dead, but Suzub, the Chaldæan patriot who had taken his place, obtained help from Elam and proclaimed himself king at Babylon, whither he was escorted by Elamite troops. Yet his triumph was brief; for the Assyrian generals instantly marched against him, and after defeating his army, took him prisoner and sent him in chains to Nineveh. Elam itself was next invaded, the city of Erech taken and sacked; its gods carried off, and a doubtful battle fought with the king, who himself led the army.

The resistance of Babylonia and Chaldæa for so many years had been made possible only by the support received from the Elamite monarch. New operations were therefore ordered against him; his mountains invaded; thirty-four cities and many villages taken, each, as it fell, being set on fire, till the smoke of them, in the words of Sennacherib himself, hid the face of the heavens like a vast cloud. The king of Elam, however, was still out of reach, for he had retired to Haidala, his mountain capital, in the interior, and the rains and

snows of winter, which had now set in, forced the Assyrians to suspend hostilities.

Suzub had escaped from Nineveh while Sennacherib was absent, and made his way back to Chaldæa, where his presence sufficed to excite a fresh revolt. He had again, however, to flee to Elam, but soon returned thence with a fresh body of followers, and once more entered Babylon as its king. Breaking open the treasuries of Bel, in the capital, and of Nergal, at Cutha, and seizing the wealth belonging to these gods, he hastened to send it to Elam to secure help. It was now the year B.C. 692.



THE ROYAL CHARIOT OF THE ASSYRIAN KING.

A new king ruled in Elam, but he marched to Suzub's assistance, without delay, with an army of Elamites, Persians, Medes, Chaldæans, and others, and the son of Merodach Baladan, who inherited his father's undying hostility to Assyria. It was all, however, in vain. A great battle was fought on the lower Tigris, and Suzub, with his allies, utterly defeated.

"They seized the front of my fenced camp," says Sennacherib, "and discharged their arrows. Then I prayed to Asshur, the

Moon, the Sun, Bel, Nebo, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh, and Ishtar of Arbela, the gods, my protectors—that I might conquer my powerful enemies, and they heard my earnest prayers and came to my assistance. From my heart I vowed a thank-offering for it.

“I drove rapidly, in the fury of my heart, in my great war chariot—the Sweeper away of Enemies—I drove rapidly. I took in my hand my great bow which Asshur gave me; I enclosed my legs in greaves of fine workmanship, and, rushing on the whole army of those wicked enemies, I crushed them together in crowded confusion, and thundered like the god Sin.¹ By command of Asshur the great lord, my Lord, I hurled as it were fiery darts² against my enemies. I cut to pieces the hostile troops with the revolving blades.³ I captured the great Chain of Honour of the General of the Elamites. I eagerly attacked and defeated the chief officers of the king of Elam, who wore gold-handled daggers, and rings of bright gold, crowded round their legs—men like a herd of fat oxen. I cut off their heads, like victims, and tore off, with derision, their highly-worked decorations, casting down their rings and bracelets on the earth in a lofty heap, like the fall of a great shower. The faultless horses yoked to my chariot stepped slowly through deep pools of blood. My chariot wheels were clogged with blood and flesh as they swept away the slain and fallen. I salted the heads of the soldiers like fish, and packed them in great wicker baskets.”⁴

Suzub, king of Babylon, and the king of Elam, mounting their chariots, tried to ride through the torrent of fugitives, but had to give up the attempt and to flee on foot. Squadrons of chariots pursued the remnant of the

¹ The god of the sky. He wielded the thunderbolt, like the Jupiter Tonans of the Romans.

² It has been thought that some composition like Greek fire was used by the Assyrians, but it is doubtful if there be an allusion to such an invention here.

³ Possibly Sennacherib refers to circular swords. See vol. ii. p. 125. Iron scythes fixed on the chariot wheels were apparently of a later date. See vol. ii. p. 385.

⁴ To be sent to Nineveh and exposed as trophies.

enemy and slew all they overtook. This terrible battle ended the fighting of the year.

Next spring, however, apparently that of B.C. 691, Sennacherib, was once more in the field, and marching against Babylon, now left without outside support, stormed it and gave it up to his soldiery. The "city and houses" were destroyed from "the foundation to the upper chambers," the whole being burnt to the ground and the very ruins thrown down. The great walls of the city were demolished; the temples of the gods plundered and destroyed, the sacred images broken to pieces; the towers of brickwork levelled; and to complete the destruction, the embankment of the river or canal "Arakhti" was pierced, and the waters allowed to flood the whole site. Babylon was at last destroyed. Yet the Babylonians were ready to rise again, ten years later, when Esarhaddon was in Sennacherib's place.¹

Another expedition, not mentioned in the inscriptions but alluded to by Greek writers,² is said to have been made to Cilicia by Sennacherib; one incident at least being still of interest, that of his alleged founding of the city of Tarsus—afterwards the birthplace of St. Paul. It was certainly regarded by the Greeks as an Assyrian town, and it seems as if we might accept it as beyond reasonable doubt, that the native place of the great Apostle of the Gentiles owed its origin to the Great King who fled in shame from before the walls of Jerusalem.

During the last nine years of his reign, Sennacherib lived at Nineveh in the great palace which he had built for himself, the splendour of which may be in part

¹ Authorities. The Annals of Sennacherib on the Bellinc Cylinder; the Taylor Cylinder; the Bavian Inscription and the Great Bull Inscription.

² Rawlinson's *Anct. Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 453.

realized by the fact that it was nearly three times as long as St. Paul's cathedral and more than twice as deep or broad.¹ All that skill, unbounded wealth, the command of the labour of innumerable prisoners of war and other slaves, and the resources of a mighty empire, could do, was lavished on this amazing structure; the grandest building raised at any time even in Nineveh. True to the military instincts of his race, moreover, he set himself to fortify his capital so as to make it, if possible, impregnable. Its walls and gates were restored and partly rebuilt; the outer rampart constituting a gigantic fortification eight miles in circumference. On these vast undertakings the Cilicians, Elamites, Babylonians, Medes, and Jews, carried off from their native countries, were forced to toil; their labours, indeed, achieving most of the amazing results. The bricks for the city walls were made by them. They raised the great mounds of earth on which the palaces rested, and they dragged into their places, by the unaided strain of thews and muscle, the huge colossal figures which stood at the gates and doors of these vast structures.

We know nothing of the circumstances which led to Sennacherib's murder. To die a violent death was, indeed, the ordinary fate of Assyrian kings. He had a large number of sons, the eldest of whom had been made viceroy of Babylon, but appears to have died before his father. Disputes seem afterwards to have risen respecting the succession, ending in a plot by two of his sons, Adrammelech² and Sharezer,³ to murder their father and

¹ Length of St. Paul's, 514 feet; depth or breadth 286. Length of Sennacherib's palace 1,500 feet; depth or breadth 700 feet. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 125.

² = The god Adar is Lord. *Schrader*.

³ = (Asshur) protect the king!

seize the throne. They committed their foul crime as he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch—the gracious one—the god, by a strange irony, to whom prayers for a blessing on families were specially directed.¹ But the parricides gained nothing by their act, for another



THE HAWK-HEADED GENIUS (KHORSABAD).

Perhaps the god Nisroch. The pine cone in the left hand is always pointed towards the king, possibly as a symbolical medium of grace and protection. In the right hand is a sacred basket, symbolizing, it may be, the gifts to be granted the monarch or other protected personage. Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, vol. ii. pp. 263-4.

brother, Esarhaddon, came forward to claim the throne, and they had to flee to Armenia, where the reigning prince allowed them to settle. Esarhaddon was then accepted as king by the whole nation.

¹ Schrader, pp. 208.

Note to List of Tribute, etc., Paid by Hezekiah, p. 442.

The list in the text is from Fox Talbot's translation, in the *Records of the Past* (vol. i. p. 41). Schrader varies the details in

some particulars. His version is as follows: "Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, works of metal, red glancing stones, great stones, couches of ivory, splendid chairs of ivory, hides of the elephant (^p), elephant's teeth, (unknown) woods of various kinds, a rich treasure; and also his (Hezekiah's) daughters, his palace ladies (harem), and the male and female servants of the harem."—*Art. Sanherib, in Riehm*.

See, also, *Keilinschriften*, p. 176. The translation in *Riehm* is the latest published.

George Smith's translation reads:—"Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones of various sorts, couches and thrones of ivory, skins and horns of buffaloes, girls and eunuchs, male and female musicians."—*Hist. of Assyria*, p. 116.

Menant's translation is: "Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, metals, precious stones, pearls, thrones (or seats) adorned with *Amsi*, *Ka Amsi*, sandal wood, ebony, the contents of his treasure house, his daughters, the women of his palace, his male and female slaves."—*Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 219.

Josephus says that Sennacherib "was buried in his own temple, Araskē."—*Ant.*, X. i. 5.

The Plague usually appears first on the northern coast of Egypt, near which Sennacherib lay. It arises apparently from the malaria of the marshes in that region, as it has not returned at Alexandria since those in the neighbourhood of that city have been drained. (*Brockhaus' Lex.*, vol. ii. p. 642.) Midwinter is the ordinary time for its first appearance, and it lasts, at most, six months. At its first outbreak it causes almost instant death, and even during its whole visitation it is commonly fatal in a few hours. Clot-Bey, *De la Peste*.

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